



II Marine Expeditionary Force (Forward)



# FAMILY NEWSLETTER

## DECEMBER 2013



# COMMANDER'S COMMENTS



*Maj. Gen. W. Lee Miller*



## **Family and Friends of II MEF (Forward),**

With just more than two months of our deployment left to go, our thoughts are turning toward home and we're looking forward to being back with our families and friends. But we also remain focused on our mission and are committed to a secure and successful handover to our colleagues from I MEF so they can continue to build on what we've accomplished during our long months here in Afghanistan.

The traditional fighting season is winding down with the Afghan National Security Forces fully in the lead. They came out ahead and continue to improve under the mentorship and guidance of your Marines and Sailors, and I'm confident they'll be well-prepared to keep their enemies off balance

and provide the security needed to ensure the people of Afghanistan are free to participate in their national elections this coming spring. The people of Afghanistan are eager to stand on their own and that will be possible thanks to the hard work of your Marines and Sailors on the Advisor Teams and across II MEF (FWD). And, as always, we couldn't do what we do without our families who keep things going on the home front while we're away

I hope you all enjoyed your Thanksgiving holiday despite the distance between loved ones. Most of the mess halls here served up a traditional Thanksgiving Day meal and many of your Marines and Sailors invited their Coalition colleagues and Afghan counterparts to join them. So while away from their families they still took the time to share in the spirit of the holiday. I know we're all thankful for all you do at home while we serve here and our hearts will be with you throughout the holiday season.

On behalf of the entire MEF, I want to wish you happy Chanukah and Merry Christmas. We'll be home soon.





# FAMILY NEWSLETTER DECEMBER 2013

## FROM THE COMMAND

COMMANDER'S COMMENTS  
SERGEANT MAJOR  
COMMAND MASTER CHIEF  
CHAPLAIN'S CORNER

## FROM THE HOMEFRONT

UPCOMING EVENTS  
FAMILY READINESS OFFICER

## FROM THE FRONTLINES

COMBAT CARE  
LETTING GO

 **FOLLOW US ON FACEBOOK**  
[facebook.com/regionalcommandsouthwest](https://facebook.com/regionalcommandsouthwest)



[www.iimeffwd.marines.mil](http://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







# SERGEANT MAJOR

*Sgt. Maj. Paul Berry*



## **Family and Friends of II MEF (Forward),**

Hello from Afghanistan! Thanksgiving has come and gone and we are all one step closer to coming home to our families and friends. The weather is much cooler and we have even had rain from time to time. Many of the units have returned already and some of the individual augments have completed their tour of duty and returned home. Each and every Marine and Sailor has contributed to the success of this command and they have made Afghanistan a better place.

I know many of you attended the Spouse Ball. I am told it was a great time. As the unit gets closer to returning home, I encourage each of you to reach out to the FRO and the Family Readiness Volunteers for events and information. Sticking together as one family will make the remainder of the deployment fly by.

The holiday season is here! The holiday care packages have started to arrive. We will soon receive a shipment of artificial Christmas Trees. That "touch of home" you send out here is deeply appreciated.

Thank you and Semper Fidelis.

Sergeant Major Berry



# COMMAND MASTER CHIEF

*Master Chief Petty Officer Kelly McNulty*

## **Greetings Navy and Marine Corps Team!**

Happy Holidays! December has finally arrived and the holidays are here. Your mail is flowing in and keeping morale high so keep it coming. There is no better way to brighten a deployed Sailor's or Marine's day than for them to receive letters, pictures, kids drawings or art projects and care packages from home. I know we may live in the day of email and Facebook but do not sell short the impact a personal, hand written letter can have on a person's day.

Now a little bit about safety through the holidays. According to the National Highway Traffic Safety Administration, "In 2010, more than 10,000 people died in alcohol-impaired driving crashes - one every 51 minutes." In a split second, an entire family could be torn apart by a drunk driver. Taking care of your friends and family could make a huge difference in the lives of those we love so much. As Thomas Jefferson once said, "No society is so precious as that of one's own family." Our Navy and Marine Corps family is a unique community with unique stressors of military life. Drinking and driving is sometimes a symptom of bigger issues the family may be dealing with. There are resources that can be found through the Marine Corps Community Services, Military OneSource, your primary care provider, the Navy-Marine Corps Relief Society, and the Chaplain's office. Another excellent resource is your own sympathetic ear and willingness to listen and provide support. By being a good friend and a good shipmate, you can make a difference in the lives of those around you.

As Christmas is fast approaching, you are all in our thoughts. We all wish that we could be home to enjoy the holiday cheer together. Separation during this holiday is especially challenging and I realize the sacrifices you all make as families during deployments are tremendous. I personally want to thank each and every one of you for the never-ending support that you give to the men and women of II MEF (FWD). Without your support, the hard work our Sailors and Marines do each and every day in the service of our great country would not be possible. I sincerely hope that you all have a very Merry Christmas and wish everyone a great 2014. May God bless all of you!



HOORAH  
CMDCM(FMF) Kelly McNulty

## Learning to Ask

Numbers 27:1-11

Additional Scripture Readings

Psalms 33:20

Zelophehad's daughters needed help. Their father's lands were about to pass out of the family because he had left no sons to inherit. The daughters felt they had a right to the land. They didn't sit back and wish they had the land. With courage and conviction, they approached Moses and asked for the land.

Help is available to us too. But we have to learn to help ourselves to it. We don't have to feel guilty about appearing weak and admitting our needs. But we do have to learn to

ask. Directly, by using words. No one can read our minds. No one is going to waltz in, recognize our predicament, and save us. Not our spouses, our best friends, or our own mothers.

Remember; relinquish some control over certain areas of responsibility; share the load as well as the laurels. We may discover that we are not as indispensable as we thought, but we'll at least be saner.

If we want help, if we need help, if we truly want someone to share the load . . . all we need to do is ask.

# CHAPLAIN'S CORNER

Cmdr. Patrick Smith



## SCHEDULE OF UPCOMING EVENTS

### **II MEF FWD FAMILY READINESS EVENT: BREAKFAST WITH SANTA**

December 7 @ Goettege Field House 10 a.m. - 2 p.m.

Breakfast with Santa! Children can take pictures with Santa, build crafts, and play exciting games. Food will be provided and will consist of a brunch menu, pancake bar, hot cocoa bar, and so much more! A DJ will be at the event as well. Spouses, please bring the kids and come relax.

### **RETURN AND REUNION WORKSHOP FOR SPOUSES (NIGHT COURSE)**

December 10 @ Onslow Beach SNCO Gazebo, 6:30 - 8:30 p.m.

Reunions are part of military life, but can be challenging even for experienced military families. This interactive workshop will help explain what may be expected during homecoming and reunion. Through real life-scenarios and discussion, spouses will learn about re-establishing communication, managing expectations, deployment stress for both the spouse and service member, and the return of intimacy.

### **BREAKFAST WITH GUNNY CLAUSE**

December 14 @ Camp Lejeune USO 8 a.m.

Bring the children out to have breakfast with Gunny Clause. Children will meet with Santa and each child will receive a gift. Only 125 spots are available for this event. Registration will begin November 15 only on the USO website.

### **RETURN AND REUNION FOR KIDS WORKSHOP**

The Family Readiness Officer is looking at the feasibility of setting up a workshop through MCFTB for children ages 6-12. This workshop will focus on the issues our children experience when a parent is deployed, as well as coping mechanisms and games to help them interact and open up. If you are interested in having your 6-12 year-old attend this workshop, please contact Mr. Cline via e-mail at [micheal.cline1@usmc.mil](mailto:micheal.cline1@usmc.mil).



# FAMILY READINESS OFFICER

*Michael Cline*

**II MEF FWD FAMILIES,**

As we move toward the holidays, please be aware of the upcoming events that are happening. This newsletter will cover holiday events, return and reunion workshops for spouses and the mailing deadlines during the Christmas season.

## **USO HOLIDAY SEASON**

The USO is in full swing as they prepare for the holiday season! The month of December will have the Breakfast with Gunny Claus, Operation Cookie Drop, and the Christmas Dinner!

Christmas Dinners are offered to all military ID card holders from 11 a.m.-4 p.m. It is a traditional homemade meal with all the trimmings along with homemade desserts, and it's FREE!!

Breakfast with Gunny Claus will be on December 14, 2013 at 8am. They only have 125 spots available for this event. Registration will be available on November 15 only on the USO website.

Operation Cookie Drop packages will be packaged on December 20th and delivered the same day. You can request cookies for your unit. Please see attached for the flyer and request form. Please call the USO at (910)-455-3411 for more information.

## **RETURN AND REUNION BRIEF (DAY COURSE 10:00-11:30 AM /NIGHT COURSE 6:30-8:00 PM)**

The next RETURN AND REUNION WORKSHOP FOR SPOUSES for December 2013 will go on Dec. 10.

**REMARKS:** Please notify me if you are attending. The CHILD CARE IS FREE and the instructions to set up Child Care are below.

Reunions are part of military life but can be challenging, even for those experienced military families. This interactive workshop helps to explain what may be expected during homecoming and reunion. Through real life scenarios and discussion, spouses will learn about re-establishing communication, managing expectations, deployment stress for both the spouse and service member, and the return of intimacy.

I have set up several "Return and Reunion Workshops" for the spouses of those military sponsors who have been or still is assigned to II MEF FWD, II MHG FWD, or the many Security Forces Assistance Advisor Teams (SFAAT).

## **DAY WORKSHOPS: Where Childcare will be provided:**

Hourly (or daily) childcare is on a first come first service basis. Families should call the CDC to make their reservations (any CDC). When calling the center, families should identify themselves as attending the "II MEF FWD Return & Reunion." This childcare will be applicable to hourly childcare on Camp Lejeune only. A family attending this event enrolled in a full time program will not receive a credit to the "full time" program fees. To allow for drive times the childcare will include approximately an hour before and after the times listed below. Please call early to make reservations. Families can call as early as one month in advance of the event date to make a reservation.

Listed below are the CDCs (and phone numbers) available for children 6 weeks through 4 years of age (or "normally" not in kindergarten).

Tarawa Terrace I CDC: 450-1646/48

Tarawa Terrace II CDC: 450-0545/46

Heroes Manor I CDC: 450-4078/89

Heroes Manor II CDC: 450-4119/20

Brewster CDC: 450-8467

Midway Park CDC: 449-9567

Courthouse Bay CDC: 440-6226/29/30

## **NIGHT WORKSHOPS: Where Childcare will be provided:**

The Brewster CDC will support this request. Families should call Brewster CDC to make reservations at (910) 450-8467. Reservations should be made as soon as possible but not later than 72 hours in advance of the event date. Childcare will be provided for children between the ages of six weeks through 12 years old. Childcare will begin at 6 p.m. and will end at approximately 9 p.m.





# 2013 MARINE CORPS MARATHON





# COMBAT CARE

**The development of the Afghan National Army's medics, surgeons in Helmand**

by Cpl. Austin Long

**B**eneath the humming lights of the small surgical ward, Dr. Abdul Wahid and Dr. Najib Ismat removed bandages from the injured soldier's head and examined his wound.

The Afghan National Army soldier had been injured by a roadside bomb. The surgeons worked diligently to treat the soldier by cleaning the wound, examining his body for shrapnel, and bandaging the wound with dressings to prevent infection.

For the soldier, triage represented a simple procedure and a few days of rehabilitation at Camp Shorabak's medical clinic.

For the Afghan National Army's 215th Corps, triage represented years of hard work and training.











### **Taking the medical lead**

Earlier in the year, U.S. and coalition forces transitioned to a supportive role in Helmand province and handed over responsibility for security to the Afghan National Security Forces.

As coalition forces decreased their presence, the responsibility for providing medical treatment to injured soldiers was shouldered by the Afghan National Army's medics and surgeons.

Advancements in battlefield care, construction of surgical and medical treatment facilities, and the addition of transportation resources have helped grow the 215th Corps medical unit into a self-sufficient and effective resource for battlefield operations.

The field medic serves as an intermediate lifeline to get patients from the battlefield to a medical facility where a surgeon or doctor can treat them with higher echelons of care.

Prior to the establishment of a trained medical corps, units would randomly select an ANA soldier and designate him a medic. His basic treatment for any injury was to apply either a tourniquet or bandage to a patient's wound and get them transported to a brigade-level medical facility for further treatment.



**TOP:** Field medics practice basic treatment procedures during an exercise at Camp Bastion. (Photo by Sgt. Bobby J. Yarbrough) **BOTTOM:** An Afghan National Army medic with the 215th Corps transports an ANA patient at the medical clinic at Camp Shorabak Oct. 14. ( Photo by Sgt. Tammy K. Hinelene)



Starting in 2010, unit medics receive two months of formal training in Kabul at the Armed Forces Academy of Medical Sciences before checking in to their units. There, medics learn hands-on trauma care techniques for stabilizing casualties on the battlefield. The two-month course teaches medics the primary lifesaving steps—stop the bleeding, check for breathing, and treat for shock.

A patient's chance at survival begins on the battlefield with the type of treatment he receives from the medic. Now that they have more training and support, medics are able to make a bigger impact on the probability a patient will survive to receive care at a clinic or surgical ward.

The 215th Corps currently has more than 150 field medics serving throughout Helmand province, including Sgt. Abdul Qadir Momand.

Momand has served as an Army medic for five years and has witnessed the evolution of battlefield care. He said he has seen the Army's capabilities change over time and he believes Army medics will only get better.

Momand said he understands the role he and fellow medics will serve in the future of the country and he takes pride in having that responsibility.

"I feel great knowing I am helping a casualty and getting him to better care when I am out with a unit on the battlefield," said Momand.

#### **Performing surgeries at clinics and on the battlefield**

Irregular warfare has defined Afghanistan since the beginning of the Soviet-Afghan War in 1979. Today, guerilla tactics are still common practice and are the primary methods used by insurgents when attempting to disrupt security operations within Helmand.

Improvised explosives devices (IEDs) are one of the most commonly used weapons in the region and many injuries ANA soldiers sustain from these roadside bombs require some type of surgery.

Following medics, ANA surgeons are the next echelon of care for soldiers receiving injuries in combat. Surgeons are versatile and can administer care ranging from cleaning shrapnel from a wound to amputating a patient's limb. Most of the Army surgeons studied at Kabul Medical University and have years of experience in treating patients with battlefield injuries.

Throughout much of Operation Enduring Freedom, 215th Corps has relied on Coalition forces at Camp Bastion or surgeons in Kandahar or Kabul to perform major operations; however, this year the unit built a surgical ward on Camp Shorabak to treat its own casualties.

The design of the surgical ward is rudimentary—a small, tan tent placed inside an old warehouse. But inside, the surgeons have state of the art medical equipment and are able to conduct complex battlefield surgery.

The surgical ward is designed to be mobile, however, until the number's of surgeons and resources increase, it will remain stationary at Camp Shorabak, said Petty Officer 2nd Class Nathan Horning, the 215th Corps Security Forces Assistance Advisor Team lead clinic advisor.



An Afghan National Army medics inject a soldier with penicillin at the 2nd Brigade, 215th Corps aid station at Forward Operating Base Nolay. (Photo by Sgt. Bryan Peterson)

"The end goal is to have a team of surgeons and medics dedicated to a mobile surgical unit who can move throughout Helmand and perform lifesaving surgery on soldiers who need immediate medical care before being transported to a clinic or hospital," said Horning.

#### **The Shorabak Clinic**

Rehabilitating injuries is important and increases a patient's chance of survival after being injured on the battlefield.

Following a soldier's surgery, 215th Corps moves them to the clinic adjacent to the surgical ward on Camp Shorabak. The building is small, but allows medical personnel to treat and monitor approximately 25 patients at once. The clinic is equipped with an x-ray room, a dental office, and a pharmacy.

In November, a new clinic is scheduled to be built and will provide more room for monitoring post-surgery patients and a larger triage center for mass-casualty situations.

For Sgt. Maj. Ahmad Zaki, 215th Corps clinic sergeant major, the new clinic is both needed and warranted.

There are more than 18,000 soldiers with 215th Corps throughout Regional Command Southwest. Zaki said because of the high number of soldiers in the area, the hospital is needed to provide enough room for new and recovering patients to be treated at the same time.



Afghan National Army medics with 215th Corps load an ANA patient onto a C-130 Hercules aircraft at Camp Bastion, Helmand province, Afghanistan, Oct. 14,. Six patients from the 215th Corps were transported to the United States for medical treatment. This was the first time an Afghan Air Force C-130 Hercules aircraft was used for Afghan medical transport in the province. (Photo by Sgt. Tammy K. Hinline )





### **Air evacuations**

After coalition forces have withdrawn from Afghanistan, the Afghan National Air Force will play a key role in the future operations in the 215th Corps medical community.

The isolated clinic will not only rely on Air Force pilots to transport patients from the battlefield, but also to deliver a steady cycle of medical supplies.

Recently, a team of ANA medics from the clinic at Shorabak accompanied six Afghan patients on a C-130 Hercules transportation mission to Kabul. The medics provided patients with en route care. This was the first time an Afghan C-130 was used to transport patients who needed en route care. Coalition pilots flew the aircraft with an Afghan Air Force pilot present to learn and observe.

ANA Sgt. Ajmir Azizi, a 215th Corps medic, was one of the medics responsible for transporting the six patients. Azizi said transporting patients by airplane was much better than in an ambulance because it made his job of tracking vital signs and monitoring patients easier. He also said he felt safer while traveling and there was more room for moving from patient to patient.

The casualty evacuation is an example of the future of medical care in Helmand Province, said Zaki.

Zaki said with more support from the Afghan Air Force, more patient transportation would be done this way, allowing his clinic to have space available for treating new patients.

"The air evacuations are going to be the focal point for us to transport patients in big numbers, regardless of their type of injury," said Zaki.

### **The future of medicine at Shorabak**

According to Lt. Cmdr. Andrew Stegall, 215th Corps SFAAT lead medical advisor, the future of medicine in Helmand relies directly on the growth and advancement of Afghan National Security Forces throughout Afghanistan.

"The medical advancement can keep pace with ANSF forces as they can continue to grow," said Stegall. "Already the clinic here has improved so quickly over the past four years. They've already outgrown some surrounding clinics in other provinces, which gives me the comfort and encouragement for the future of the 215th Corps medical community."

ANA Colonel Mohamad Agah, the 215th Corps lead surgeon, said he believes the future of the 215th Corps is clear.

"If my medics and medical staff continue doing as well as we have been, we will continue to have success with our patients surviving and returning home or to the fight," said Agah.

the medical clinic at Camp Shorabak, including military and civilians, were transferred to



# LETTING GO

**Military advisors prepare for next step in Afghanistan**

by Cpl. Paul Peterson

**A**s sure as the seasons, the mission for American military advisors is in a period of transition across Afghanistan.

Afghan forces have taken responsibility for their own security and that mission is a daily balancing act for the Security Force Assistance Advisor Team attached to the Afghan National Army's 4th Brigade, 215th Corps, here.

Now, as November comes to a close, the 37 advisors at FOB Delaram II know the end to their mission is quickly approaching and the Afghans will be ready to stand on their own.











We're trying to give the Afghans all we can as we make this last push to make them independent," said Capt. William Cornachio, SFAAT fires advisor. "That's essentially the goal out here, to make them as independent as they can be."

Cornachio and his peers spent the last three months fostering relationships with their Afghan counterparts and strengthening the brigade's core capabilities. They helped create and improve training programs, monitored the development of local police forces, trained Afghan medical personnel, and built upon the unit's combat capabilities.

Fourth Brigade is the newest addition to 215th Corps, founded on personnel pulled from the corps' other brigades in 2012. Cornachio and his fellow service members are only the second advisor team to work with the unit in Delaram.

Every day they strive to do more by simply doing less.

"Everybody is kind of having their end of mission, whenever that may be," said Petty Officer 1st Class Jared Aguon, a medical advisor with the team. "[You] want to jump in, but if you jump in all the time, especially when they have the situation under control, you kind of take a step backward in the mentorship mission."



**TOP:** Capt. William Cornachio (center), a Security Force Assistance Advisor Team fires advisor assigned to 4th Brigade, Afghan National Army 215th Corps, explains procedures for using mortars to Afghan soldiers at Forward Operating Base Delaram II, Nov. 17. **BOTTOM:** An Afghan National Army soldier from 4th Brigade, 215th Corps, learns how to employ a mortar tube during an Afghan led training course at Forward Operating Base Delaram II, Nov. 17.



“We’re trying to give the Afghans all we can as we make this last push to make them independent.”

*Capt. William Cornachio*

Aguon credits the past advisor team for setting a solid medical foundation among the ANA medics. It has allowed him to remain hands off despite the heavy patient flow through the unit’s medical facility.

Controlling Delaram and the surrounding area, however, is not a hands-off proposition for the ANA.

Delaram serves as a desert crossing, a heavily trafficked intersection linking Afghanistan with both Iran and Pakistan. Sitting alongside both Highway 1 and Route 606, the city bears the unhappy distinction as the crossroads of the opium trade.

With menacing landmark names such as the Devil’s Elbow, small battles with extremists at security force checkpoints are common. Protecting the trade routes keeps ANSF and medical crews at Delaram busy. It also generates a sense of urgency among many of the mentor team’s members.

“They’re more keen on learning these skills,” said Aguon, a native of Bremerton, Wash. “If you see trauma coming in every day like these guys, you know that if [medical advisors] are teaching you some skills that apply to patients you know you’re going to get, you pay more attention.

“A lot of times they don’t even want us to touch the patients,” continued Aguon. “They just want to do it themselves.”

Cornachio has seen similar developments with his counterparts.

Cornachio helped build a cadre of Afghan instructors to train the brigade’s mortar teams after his mission is over. Several classes have already completed the program, with the most recent group graduating at the end of November.

“They have a core of instructors who are pretty well versed after going through the course with the advisors,” said Cornachio, a Manhasset, N.Y., native. “I’d say that’s the biggest improvement I’ve seen.”

Cornachio occasionally observes the instructors as they train Afghan soldiers. He answers questions or provides further guidance. However, the real weight of instruction is on the ANA soldiers themselves.

“They build on that and pass on the knowledge to the other soldiers,” said Cornachio. “When they reach that point where they actually understand what you’re trying to get through to them, the importance of what they’re learning ... that’s the big reward right there.”

By reinforcing training, instead of just doing it themselves, the advisors hope to create a self-perpetuating mentoring system within the brigade. The team will eventually leave the country, but they hope their legacy at 4th Brigade will speak for them in their absence.



**ABOVE:** Capt. Jason Beninate, advisor with the Security Force Assistance Advisor Team assigned to 4th Brigade, Afghan National Army 215th Corps, speaks with an ANA soldier at Forward Operating Base Delaram, Nov. 19.

**BELOW:** Afghan National Army soldiers with 4th Brigade, 215th Corps, train to employ mortars during an Afghan led mortar class at Forward Operating Base Delaram II, Nov. 17, 2013. Security Force Assistance Advisor Team members trained a cadre of ANA instructors to lead the course as part of ongoing efforts to create self-sufficiency within the brigade.





