



II Marine Expeditionary Force (Forward)



FAMILY NEWSLETTER

JANUARY 2014



COMMANDER'S COMMENTS



Maj. Gen. W. Lee Miller



Family and Friends of II MEF (Forward),

This will be our final newsletter as we move into our final month of operations and prepare to return home to friends and family. As I look forward to those reunions I'm also looking back on our year here with feelings of both pride and loss.

Your II MEF (FWD) Marines and Sailors have excelled at every turn, adapting quickly to the Security Force Assistance mission to advise and mentor their Afghan National Security Forces colleagues who are now in the lead. During our time here we have seen the Afghans face a determined enemy, stand toe-to-toe with him, and send him running. The Afghan National Army and National Police held their ground this fighting season and are providing the people of Afghanistan with the security and confidence they'll need to

come forward and choose their leaders during elections here this coming spring. Together we've helped build a professional modern military that can give the people it serves an opportunity to choose their own future

It was a challenge being away from our families and loved ones throughout the holidays, but the support from home was terrific. Care packages came in by the dozen from people we know - and many we don't, Americans who gave their personal time to send gift boxes to "Any Service Member" in appreciation for what your service members do each day here in Afghanistan. It was clear that while we may be far from home we are not forgotten and the holiday spirit was with us here at Camp Leatherneck and throughout our remaining bases here in Helmand.

But December was also a difficult month for us. Two of our Marines were killed in action: LCpl. Matthew Rodriguez, 19, of Fairhaven, Mass., with 1st Combat Engineer Battalion, died December 11 when helping keep routes clear for our forces and the Afghans. Sgt. Daniel Vasselian, 27, of Abington, Mass., with 1st Battalion, 9th Marine Regiment was killed December 23 during a security patrol to ensure the safety of our camps. We said our farewells to both Marines in formation on the tarmac as they began their final flights home and saw in media reporting that their communities rallied to support their families and friends. Please keep them in your hearts and prayers as you prepare for our return.

It has been a long and challenging year, but successful in no small part due to the support from all of you back home. Thank you once again for all you've done to keep the home fires burning during our months away.

See you soon. We're almost there.

FAMILY NEWSLETTER JANUARY 2014

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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! I want to start by wishing all of you a belated Merry Christmas and Happy New Year. We all know it is hard being separated from loved ones during this special time of year. Your words of encouragement have made this a great holiday season. The almost overwhelming amount of care packages would take your breath away. There will never be a doubt in anyone's mind that America loves her Marines and Sailors.

The Commandant of the Marine Corps, Sergeant Major of the Marine Corps, Mrs. Amos and Medal of Honor recipient Sergeant Dakota Myer visited during Christmas. All of the Marines and Sailors enjoyed having these visitors. Mrs. Amos asked me to thank all of you for your strength and loving support during this long deployment. You are the true heroes of America.

As we approach the final weeks of this challenging deployment, I look back at the obstacles all of us have overcome. The best part of a deployment is overcoming challenges together and making new friends.

While the Marines and Sailors are starting to make preparations for their return there is much work to be done. We will finish strong.

Thank you and Semper Fi,
Sergeant Major Berry



COMMAND MASTER CHIEF

Master Chief Petty Officer Kelly McNulty

Greetings Navy and Marine Corps Team!

Happy New Year Navy and Marine Corps Team! I hope the holidays were joyous and you are ready for 2014. My single most important message for our team for this New Year is for all of us to finish strong. I am proud of the high level of dedication and professionalism our Sailors, Marines, and you, our precious families, have had on the mission success this past year.

Despite the challenges, tough-working conditions, and uncertain environment, you have all showed great teamwork and a can do attitude from start to finish. We will have personnel returning home very soon and with that comes new challenges.

Take care of yourself, your Marines and Sailors! Maintain good communication with your chain of command throughout the return process. Keeping a physical fitness regimen, getting plenty of sleep, and eating properly will help your Sailors and Marines transition home and maintain a semblance of normalcy. Once they arrive home, set some fun personal and professional goals as a family. Always remember what you do matters even though the adjustment may seem hard, hang in there and give them time. It has been a long but great year and I am so proud to have been a part of this Navy and Marine Corps team. We are almost home, but we need to finish strong. Stay focused! Thank you so much for your sacrifice in spending the holidays far from your loved ones. I know each one of them missed you too.

Stay safe and have a wonderful 2014!

HOORAH
CMDRCM(FMF) Kelly McNulty



Love Forgives

What I have forgiven, if I have forgiven anything, I did it for your sakes in the presence of Christ. — 2 Corinthians 2:10

Someone wrote "Forgiveness has to happen, or a successful marriage won't." and "what a marriage takes is two good forgivers!" What this means is good marriages aren't ones in which there is never any hurt, never any disappointment, never any betrayal, never any mistakes but... good marriages which follow 1 Corinthians 13:5 "Love keeps no record of wrongs." That is a key to a successful marriage.

How important is forgiveness? When you forgive another person, you're not turning them loose. You're just turning them over to God, who can be counted on to deal with them His way. . . . It's about freedom and peace. Carrying around the burden of un-forgiveness is especially dangerous during deployment because it can cause distractions and guilt. Misunderstandings can be so common when you are

geographically separated—we must always be in a posture of grace, thinking the best of each other.

Easier said than done? Perhaps, but it's worth it if you can day-by-day surrender the arguing, the winning-and-losing, the rehearsing of wrongdoing, the scripting of grievances—and let God do what He promises in Romans 12:19, "'Vengeance is Mine, I will repay', says the Lord." This does not mean things should not get addressed that need to get addressed; it just clears you of having to worry about how to punish them. This is not a simple issue, but try it and you might feel like a weight has been lifted off of your shoulders.

Say "I choose to forgive" and mean it. Be kind and compassionate to one another, forgiving each other, just as in Christ God forgave you. — Ephesians 4:32

Bear with each other and forgive whatever grievances you may have against one another. Forgive as the Lord forgave you. — Colossians 3:13

CHAPLAIN'S CORNER

Cmdr. Patrick Smith



SCHEDULE OF UPCOMING EVENTS

Spouse Workshops

The Return and Reunion Workshop was designed to explain through interactive participation, what can be reasonably expected during the reunion process of a Homecoming. The workshop focuses on re-integration, deployment stress, communication, intimacy concerns, and expectations.

Several Return and Reunion Workshops are available prior to the return of II MEF FWD. Both day and night workshops are offered. Child Care is free if you attend the workshops.

EVENT: RETURN AND REUNION WORKSHOP FOR SPOUSES (DAY COURSE)
DATE: 7 January 2014
TIME: 10:00-11:30 AM
LOCATION: Marine Corps Family Team Building (BLDG LC 4012A – Midway Park)

EVENT: RETURN AND REUNION WORKSHOP FOR SPOUSES (NIGHT COURSE)
DATE: 21 January 2014
TIME: 6:30-8:00 PM
LOCATION: Marine Corps Family Team Building (BLDG LC 4012A – Midway Park)

EVENT: RETURN AND REUNION WORKSHOP FOR SPOUSES (DAY COURSE)
DATE: 4 February 2014
TIME: 10:00-11:30 AM
LOCATION: Marine Corps Family Team Building (BLDG LC 4012A – Midway Park)

If you are interested in attending any of these workshops, please RSVP immediately with the II MEF FWD Family Readiness Officer (Mr. Michael Cline) at michael.e.cline1@usmc.mil or call (910) 450-5939 or (910) 546-7996.

NOTE: There are also Return and Reunion Workshops for Parents and Children offered by the Marine Corps Family Team Building in Midway Park. If there is sufficient interest, workshops can also be planned for specific audiences.

FAMILY READINESS OFFICER

Michael Cline



II MEF FWD FAMILIES,

As we near the end of our deployment, families will experience several changes in their lives. The information in this newsletter focuses on these phases and provides additional information on workshops available.

Please use the information to prepare for the return of your Marines and Sailors of II MEF FWD and the Security Force Assistant Advisor Teams.

This will be the last II MEF FWD family newsletter, and I would like to thank all those Family Readiness Assistants, Volunteers, and families who have endured this deployment. Your personal sacrifices for your families and military sponsors are noteworthy and cannot be truly be put down in words. The success of II MEF FWD and the Security Force Assistant Advisor Teams in Afghanistan is due to the diligence and unselfish devotion you have exhibited for all the Marines, Sailors, and civilians who have been overseas.

It has been a true pleasure being your Family Readiness Officer.

R/S
Mr. Michael Cline

ANTICIPATION PHASE

The start of this phase may vary according to the Family Member or Military Member.

COUPLES

Spouses and Significant others may experience this 4-6 weeks out from the homecoming of their Marine or Sailor. They may realize they have not finished all they had planned to accomplish during the deployment separation and may force upon themselves undue stress as they rush to finish these last tasks. They feel the coming joy and excitement in being together again, but may feel overwhelmed with things not completed. The sudden realization of dealing with potential changes and decisions made throughout the deployment begin to surface. That "moment" is played over and over in the spouse and significant other's mind of the finality of meeting their Marine and Sailor for the first time since they left. Marines and Sailors are experiencing the same aspects, and may consider what has changed, role reversals, expectations of what each other have for one another.

CHILDREN

Your actions as a caregiver will influence the conduct of the younger children during this phase, for they will follow your example, while older children may experience or exhibit actions that resemble those of the caregiver, and stress as they deal with whether or not they accomplished what they believed was their deployed parent's expectation(s). There will be excitement, joy, and possible anxiety. Caregivers need to be aware of identifying the positives and regulate the negatives.

PARENTS

They may see the deployment as an end, and feel relieved that their son or daughter is finally and safely back in the United States. They may make plans to see the homecoming and scramble for directions and feedback from the Family Readiness Officer as they prepare to go into uncharted territory of the Marine Corps Base Camp Lejeune geographical areas.

HOMECOMING PHASE

This phase can be both an exciting and mad scramble to put everything in place with last-minute planning as preparations of the Marines and Sailors homecoming occurs.

COUPLES

Couples may feel awkward and nervous as they meet again. Excitement and joy of one's return from deployment may overshadow all emotions. A separated entity is once again whole, so changes are bound to happen. They may experience communication to be challenging, maybe even awkward to the point of being considered out of practice (rusty). The sudden shock of seeing each other in the flesh can have an overwhelming

influence on anyone. Everyone will go through it at some level. Couples may feel they are reliving somewhat a honeymoon-phase all over, looking for acceptance and new found emotional connection. This is especially true for spouses and significant others, while Marines and Sailors may experience a disconnect from their family or home. Most Marines and Sailors will take post-deployment leave to reconnect with their spouses and significant others as well as children.

CHILDREN

Children are usually excited about the return of their deployed parent, but they can also experience anxiety and confusion as they experience changes brought on by the inclusion of the deployed parent. They may feel lost and upset when their living routine has been changed. They may feel resentment and anger towards the deployed parent or caregiver. Parents need to be aware that subtle changes can affect the demeanor of the child, and should take the time to explain the possibilities of change(s) that may occur when the deployed parent returns. Parents should explain positively and affirm that change can be both beneficial and rewarding.

REINTEGRATION PHASE

Reintegration is not instant. Marines and Sailors have experience living routines that are constant throughout the deployment and may have experienced a bit of emotional disconnect when they are introduced to their state-side environment initially. Spouses and significant others, parents, and children can spend more time readdressing the roles and responsibilities than when the deployment was going. You are physically including all parts of the family unit, and no longer is there an absent party.

COUPLES

Couples will start to learn how to identify changes in the environment, relationship, and become more comfortable with one another. The interaction and relationship becomes more accustomed to the pre-deployment phase, as roles of both are identified, accepted, and supported. They will start to feel emotionally on the same page and regain the intimacy they experienced before.

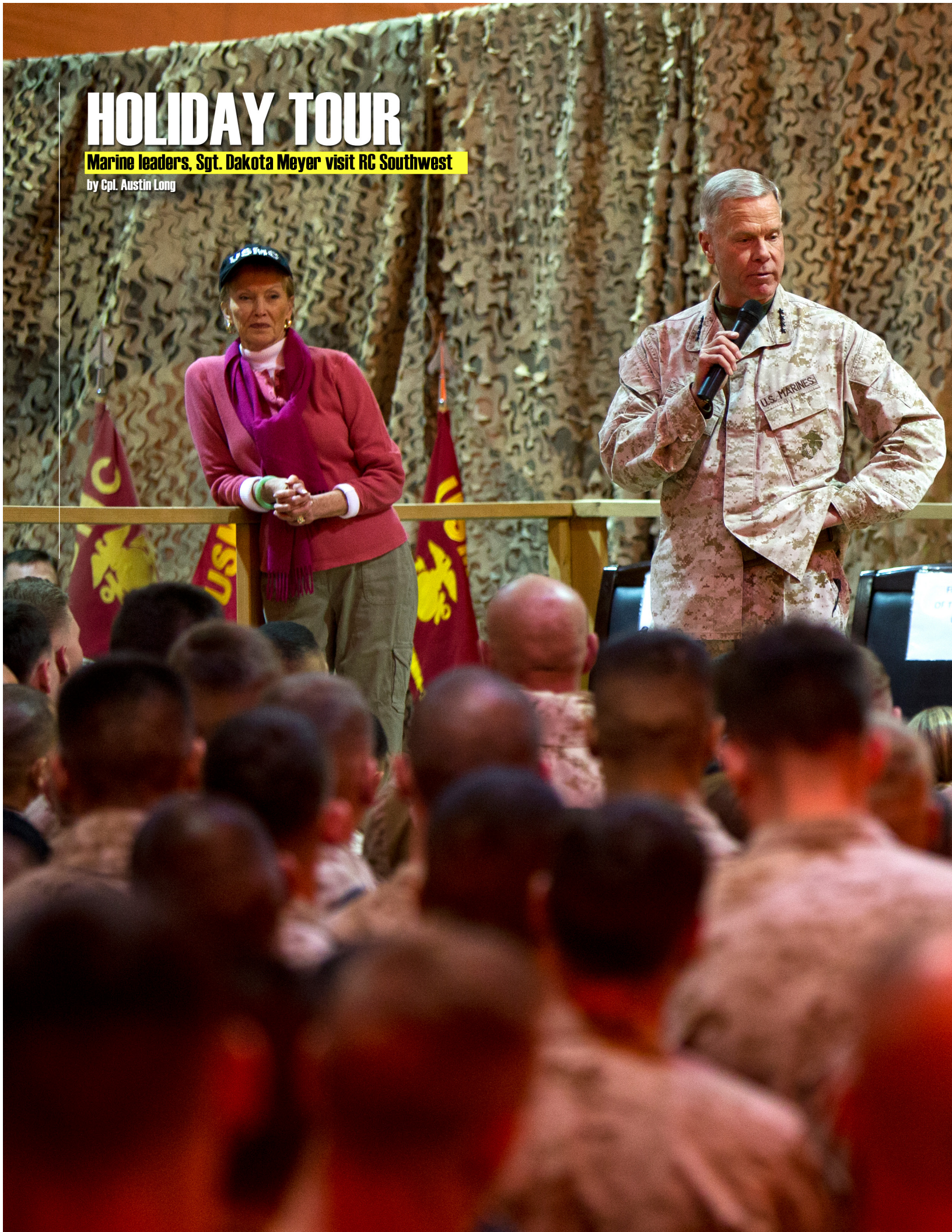
CHILDREN

Children may feel their deployed parent may deploy again, that truthfulness is uncertain. This is especially true in younger children who may exhibit a concentration of "clinginess" or "leave anxiety". Older children may show dissatisfaction in changes wrought from the arrival of a deployed parent, but usually show joy and contentment of the reunification of the family.

HOLIDAY TOUR

Marine leaders, Sgt. Dakota Meyer visit RC Southwest

by Cpl. Austin Long







Commandant of the Marine Corps Gen. James F. Amos and Sergeant Major of the Marine Corps Sgt. Maj. Michael Barrett visited Marines and sailors with Regional Command [Southwest], Dec. 23-26.

Gen. Amos was accompanied by his wife, Bonnie Amos, and Medal of Honor recipient Sgt. Dakota Meyer. The four visited Marines and sailors at forward operating bases throughout Helmand province to celebrate the holiday season.

"We came out to spend Christmas with you," said Gen. Amos, while talking to Marines at Camp Leatherneck, Afghanistan. "It's meaningful for [us]. There's no place on Earth that I'd rather be than here with you."

Gen. Amos said this would be the last Christmas



TOP: Sgt. Dakota Meyer, Medal of Honor recipient, serves dinner in the dining facility at Camp Leatherneck Dec. 25. **BOTTOM:** The Sergeant Major of the U.S. Marine Corps, Sgt. Maj. Micheal P. Barrett greets Marines with 2nd Marine Aircraft Wing (Forward) at Camp Bastion Dec. 24.

“There will probably be less than 200 Marines in Afghanistan by Christmas day next year,” said Gen. Amos while talking to Marines gathered at Camp Leatherneck. “This is mine, my wife’s, and Sgt. Maj. Barrett’s last opportunity to be in Afghanistan together with you all for Christmas. If you’re going to be here, we want to be here. I’ll remember this and talk about his for the rest of my life. Thank you for being Marines.”

Bonnie, Barrett, and Meyer also spoke to Marines telling them how proud they are of them and how much they enjoy being with them during the holidays.

“I just want to say thank you,” Bonnie said to a group of Marines from 1st Battalion, 9th Marine Regiment and 3rd Battalion, 7th Marines. “Thank you for being so great and doing what you do. Don’t forget those loved ones back home that wish you were under their tree right now. Today is Christmas Eve; it’s easy to forget when you’re out here. Don’t forget who loves you and reach out and touch that person today or tomorrow.”

During their visit, Gen. Amos and Barrett made a special visit to present two Marines from 1/9 with autographed Kevlar helmets. Cpl. Ian Gorman and Lance Cpl. Indy Johnson were wounded while conducting combat operations Dec. 4. Both Marines were shot in the head, but neither was seriously injured because their helmets deflected the bullets.

Gen. Amos decided to give the Marines autographed helmets after an email went viral among Marine Corps leaders regarding a missing and lost gear statement by Gorman.

Gorman’s statement said, ‘I was shot in the helmet by the enemy. I need a new one. I do not desire to reimburse the government.’

Submitting an official statement to replace missing or damaged gear is an administrative formality.

The group visited service members at Forward Operating Base Deleram, FOB Shukvani, FOB Dwyer, FOB Shindand, Camp Bastion, and Camp Leatherneck.

The group ended the tour by serving a Christmas dinner to service members at Dining Facility 5 on Camp Leatherneck.



TOP: Sgt. Maj. Micheal P. Barrett, Sergeant Major of the Marine Corps, speaks to Marines and sailors with Hotel Company, Marine Special Operations Command, during a visit to Forward Operating Base Shindand Dec. 25. **BOTTOM:** Commandant of the Marine Corps Gen. James F. Amos, right, talks to Gunnery Sgt. Steven Davis, a career planner with 2nd Marine Aircraft Wing (2nd MAW) Forward at Camp Bastion Dec. 24.

COMBAT CARE

Afghan medics attend Ambulatory Course

by Cpl. Austin Long







Medics with the Afghan National Army's 215th Corps completed a two-week En-Route Care Course at Camp Tombstone, Afghanistan, Dec. 2-12.

The course was designed to provide ANA medics with advanced training in ambulatory care in an effort to increase the survivability rate for injured soldiers.

Earlier this year, U.S. and coalition forces transitioned to a supportive role in Helmand province and handed over responsibility for security to Afghan National Security Forces. As a result of the transition, the responsibility for providing medical treatment to injured soldiers was shouldered by the 215th Corps.

"Sometimes the medics are taking care of the patients for up to, or more than, two hours in the back of a vehicle during transportation," said U.S. Navy Lt. Cmdr. Michael Pruitt, the ERCC lead instructor from Twenty-nine Palms, Calif. "This course is giving them the skills to successfully



TOP: Afghan National Army Staff Sgt. Mohammad Sadeq, a medic with the Afghan Commandos, assesses a patient during a simulation exercise at Camp Tombstone, Afghanistan, Dec. 2. **BOTTOM:** During a simulated exercise, Afghan National Army Pvt. Osmani Khodaynoor, a 215th Corps medic, applies a neck brace to a patient in the back of an ambulance at Camp Tombstone, Afghanistan, Dec. 3.

keep the patient alive during evacuation and help raise patient survivability rates.”

During the course, ANA medics learned how to conduct primary patient assessments for main traumas, including blocked airways, massive bleeding and amputations. Advisors also taught medics how to conduct secondary assessments of patients after they have been stabilized to identify slighter injuries.

The medics performed practical application exercises on how to apply tourniquets, release pressure in a patient’s chest, control bleeding, treat for shock, and stabilize fractures or neck injuries.

Most of the ANA medics who attended the course already had experience in treating battlefield casualties. Because of their experience, each medic had a strong interest in learning the advanced techniques for en-route treatment.

“The training was great. Some of the stuff we learned was new to me,” said ANA Pvt. Abdul Jalil, a medic with the 4th Brigade, 215th Corps. “I’m looking forward to taking this training back to 4th Brigade and teaching the other medics, because it’s going to help us take better care of our soldiers on the battlefield. It’s the medic who is on the battlefield treating the soldier first and it’s up to us to get him to the doctors alive.”

After graduating the course, the medics will return to their units as qualified ERCC instructors and will begin teaching other soldiers ambulatory care.

“This class is the first step to get them to a level where they can begin to take over and teach Afghan medics how to safely and effectively transport patients from the battlefield to a hospital,” said U.S. Navy Lt. Cmdr. Robert Krejci, an ERCC instructor from Temecula, Calif. “It’s helping them to transition into being able to train each other on handling common battlefield injury. We want them to have all the needed foundations established for a smooth transition.”



TOP: U.S. Navy Lt. Cmdr. Michael Pruitt teaches Afghan National Army medics how to conduct patient assessments during a two-week En-Route Care Course at Camp Tombstone, Afghanistan, Dec. 5. **BOTTOM:** Afghan National Army Pvt. Asadullah Hkalid, a medic with the 215th Corps, listens to U.S. Navy Lt. Brett Salazar, an En-Route Care Course instructor, as he explains how to use intravenous bags at Camp Tombstone, Afghanistan, Dec. 9.

