

MARINE EXPEDITIONARY BRIGADE - AFGHANISTAN

FAMILY NEWSLETTER



The Command Element of Regional Command (Southwest) in Helmand province, Afghanistan.



From the Commander's Desk:

Dear friends and family,

Greetings from Afghanistan! It has been two months since our last newsletter, and your Marines and Sailors have been very busy since then. Our first group left for Afghanistan early December, and the last group arrived here late January. It was a long trip, as I'm sure you heard, and we hit the ground running.

As soon as we arrived we went through Reception, Staging and Onward Integration (RSO&I) training, which includes an introduction to the base, local policies, Law of War and Rules of Engagement classes, Counter-Improvised Explosive Device Training, and sighting in our weapons. Then it was time to get to work.



The transition with II Marine Expeditionary Force (Forward) went well, and they set us up for success. Our team shadowed their II MEF counterparts, working in what we call a "right seat, left seat" method. First we observed the outgoing team, then worked alongside them, and then they stepped back and let us take the lead while they watched ready to support if needed.

The transfer of authority has been a long process and is now complete. Combat Logistics Battalion-7 (CLB-7) from Twenty-nine Palms conducted their Transfer of Authority (TOA) ceremony with the Camp Lejeune-based CLB-6 on Jan. 26. Third Marine Aircraft Wing (3rd MAW) conducted their TOA with 2nd MAW on Feb. 4, and on Feb. 5 we assumed command for Regional Command (Southwest). On that day we also changed our name from I MEF (Fwd) to Marine Expeditionary Brigade-Afghanistan (MEB-A).

The transition went well, and your Marines and Sailors are hard at work. Our priority is conducting what we call Security Force Assistance (SFA), which is simply helping to advise and mentor the Afghan military and police so they will be ready to accept full security responsibility before we depart.

One major task is helping the Afghans prepare for the April national elections. The upcoming change in national leadership will be vital to the future of Afghanistan and to the relationship between our nations. We will continue to advise and assist the Afghan National Security Forces (ANSF) until the end, but following the elections our attention will increasingly shift to our redeployment.

The task of redeploying all of our Marines, Sailors and equipment is a daunting task, but we are up to the challenge! I can't tell you when your Marine or Sailor will get home, but some of our team members will start leaving this summer, and we will set the conditions necessary for whatever will happen post-2014.

This is a multinational effort, and we are working alongside British, Estonian, Georgian, Danish, Tongan, Bosnian and Afghan forces. Afghanistan is still a dangerous place, but I assure you we are making every effort and allocating every resource necessary to keep your loved ones safe.

We know Valentine's Day is coming up, and I can assure you our thoughts will be with you. Hopefully everyone will get the chance to call home, but please understand that some people may not make it to a phone. We appreciate your support more than we can say, and we can't do what we are doing without you.

Semper Fidelis,

D. D. YOO

Brigadier General, U.S. Marine Corps

Commanding General, Marine Expeditionary Brigade - Afghanistan / RC(SW)



From the Sergeant Major:

Dear family and friends,

Two months ago I wrote to you about the successful training your Marines and Sailors were completing in preparation for our upcoming deployment. Today I write from Afghanistan and can confidently tell you that the training and long nights at Camp Pendleton paid off.

Your Marines and Sailors have arrived in Helmand province poised to complete their mission. We have finished our turnover with the II Marine Expeditionary Force (Forward) and Marine Expeditionary Brigade – Afghanistan is now the command element for Regional Command (Southwest). Each one of us is excited for the mission ahead and is confident we will complete it successfully.

Throughout our time in Helmand there will be many adjustments. We will reduce in manpower during the course of the year, and our living conditions will become more austere. Our mission will be challenging, but like those who have gone before us, we will succeed.

Your Marines and Sailors continue to do amazing things in Afghanistan and continue to impact the future of this country. We wouldn't be successful here without your support at home. We thank you for the care packages, letters and emails, and we will do our best to continue to stay in contact with you as much as possible throughout the year.

Semper Fidelis,

D. E. BERRY, JR.

Sergeant Major, Marine Expeditionary Brigade - Afghanistan / RC(SW)



From the Command Master Chief:

To our family, friends and loved ones:

I can proudly say our Sailors and Marines have safely made it to southern Afghanistan and have assumed responsibility as the command element for Regional Command (Southwest). The turnover your Sailors and Marines received from II Marine Expeditionary Force (Forward) was outstanding, and our team has definitely been setup for success.

The Afghan National Army and Afghan National Police are doing great things here in Helmand province, and we look forward to continuing to advise and assist them throughout the year.

Your Sailors and Marines are extremely busy advising their counterparts and may not have the ability to call home as much as you both would like. Just know they are completing their mission and doing remarkable things here.

We can't thank our family, friends and loved ones enough for your support. You stood by our side during predeployment training back at Camp Pendleton, and we thank you for the support and well-wishes while deployed.

Semper Fidelis,

F. DOMINGUEZ

Command Master Chief, Marine Expeditionary Brigade - Afghanistan / RC(SW)



Chaplain's Corner

Greetings, families!

We have been on deck long enough for the reality of deployment to set in, and in one man's opinion, things are going very well for your Marines and Sailors. I pray the same could be said for each of you. As we all settle in to our various routines, I can't help but be impressed by the quality people I work with each day. I mean no disrespect to anyone who has served our nation, and I certainly honor the service and sacrifice of those who have gone before me, but I can't help believing that the Marines and Sailors deployed in our area of operations are America's next "Greatest Generation." Their intelligence, drive and determination are inspirational, and I know I am blessed to serve with them.



I also know from experience that this can be a trying time for each of us. I know of no Marine or Sailor that enjoys family separation. I have also yet to meet a family member that looks forward to their Marine or Sailor deploying. Roles change, stressors can increase and loneliness can set in. If you are feeling stressed or alone, talk to somebody you trust who has had similar experiences. Get involved in your community. If you are unsure about how to start this, call the I MEF Family Readiness Office. They are a great resource of information and referral. Take action!

Lastly, because this cross I wear on my left collar is not costume jewelry, let me remind you of something from my faith tradition. In his letter to the church at Philippi, St. Paul writes, "Be anxious for nothing, but in everything, by prayer and supplication, let your requests be made known to God. And the peace of God which surpasses all understanding shall guard your hearts and minds in Christ Jesus." Blessings to all!

Semper Fidelis,

T. H. HUNT

Chaplain, Marine Expeditionary Brigade - Afghanistan / RC(SW)

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Camp Pendleton-based unit assumes command in southwest Afghanistan



ABOVE: Major Gen. W. Lee Miller Jr., left, commanding general, II Marine Expeditionary Force (Forward), prepares to pass the Regional Command (Southwest) battle colors to Brig. Gen. Daniel Yoo, commanding general, Marine Expeditionary Brigade – Afghanistan, during a transfer of authority ceremony aboard Camp Leatherneck, Afghanistan, Feb. 5, 2014. The passing of the battle colors represented the transfer of command and control of coalition operations in Helmand and Nimroz provinces.

To read more about the transfer of authority and to see more photos from the ceremony, [click here](#).



RIGHT: Brigadier Gen. Daniel Yoo, commanding general, Marine Expeditionary Brigade – Afghanistan, speaks to Marines, Sailors, Soldiers and coalition members during a transfer of authority ceremony aboard Camp Leatherneck, Afghanistan, Feb. 5, 2014. The Camp Pendleton, Calif., based unit assumed responsibility of Regional Command (Southwest) from the Camp Lejeune, N.C., based II Marine Expeditionary Force (Forward) Marines and Sailors.



Marines and their coalition partners stand at parade rest prior to the start of the Regional Command (Southwest) transfer of authority ceremony aboard Camp Leatherneck, Afghanistan, Feb. 5, 2014. During the ceremony, II Marine Expeditionary Force (Forward) transferred command and control of coalition operations in Helmand and Nimroz provinces to Marine Expeditionary Brigade – Afghanistan.