



MARINES PRACTICE AMPHIBIOUS WAR, STORM U.S. BEACHES

ABOARD THE USS WASP (AP) -- A small group of Marines trudged onto the beach sands in pitch-black night with an armada of U.S. Navy warships sailing just off the shore. Their mission: root out insurgents that threatened to attack another American force to the south. The careful operation under cover of darkness wasn't an assault in the Middle East or Asia. It was a training exercise on the coast of Virginia and North Carolina — the largest amphibious training exercise attempted in the last decade — designed to return thousands of Marines to their amphibious roots and train for a more modern version of the well-known beach assaults conducted during World War II. "Sooner or later, the nation is going to require a sizeable force to go somewhere where folks don't want us to go. So, no, the image is not Iwo Jima, Tarawa and so forth, but nevertheless, when we go to shore someplace where we're not wanted ashore, we have to be ready to defend force to accomplish the mission and then to



attempted in the last decade — designed to return thousands of Marines to their amphibious roots and train for a more modern version of the well-known beach assaults conducted during World War II. "Sooner or later, the nation is going to require a sizeable force to go somewhere where folks don't want us to go. So, no, the image is not Iwo Jima, Tarawa and so forth, but nevertheless, when we go to shore someplace where we're not wanted ashore, we have to be ready to defend force to accomplish the mission and then to

sustain the force once it's ashore," said Brig. Gen. Christopher Owens, deputy commanding general of 2nd Marine Expeditionary Force.

Read the rest of the Associated Press article

Also watch: Marines Practice Amphibious Assaults

HEROES

MARINES RESCUE AFGHAN POLICEMEN FROM COLLAPSED BUILDING



Marines with Afghan National Civil Order Police (ANCOP) Mentorship Team Two (PMT-II), 3rd Battalion, 7th Marines, rescued two Afghan policemen from a building that collapsed on Jan. 22 in Sangin Tufaan. The Marines were conducting a leadership engagement when an over-watch post constructed out of sandbags on top of a three story hardened structure collapsed into itself. The Marines immediately ran to the scene to see if anyone was trapped. They began removing rubble, concertina

wire and sandbags to clear a path. "I couldn't be prouder of my Marines," said Gunnery Sgt. James Fuentes. "The Marines gave the notice that something had happened and it was basically autopilot from there. Their training came into play right there. Everything was like clockwork." The Marines began the "9-line" casualty evacuation process, and pulled two Afghan policemen from underneath the debris. One of the men suffered severe injuries and was flown to a battalion aid station at Forward Operating Base Jackson. The second officer did not survive the collapse. 3rd Battalion, 7th Marine Regiment, is currently assigned to Regimental Combat Team 6 in 2nd Marine Division (Forward), which heads Task Force Leatherneck.

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3/6 HONORS BROTHERHOOD AND SACRIFICE DURING PURPLE HEART CEREMONY



Nine members of 3rd Battalion, 6th Marine Regiment, 2nd Marine Division were awarded the Purple Heart for their sacrifices during a ceremony aboard Marine Corps Base Camp Lejeune, N.C. on Jan. 27. The Purple Heart is awarded to service members who have been wounded, killed or died after being wounded. "I was fortunate enough to only receive a minor wound, while some Marines will never walk again and sometimes that makes it hard to accept this award, but then I realize that no matter the sacrifice, I am now a part of a group of men who have a physical or

emotional mark that shows that they have sacrificed something so that others can stand here. I am definitely glad to be a part of that," said Gunnery Sgt. Christopher Whitman, platoon sergeant of 2nd platoon, Company L, 3/6. Family and friends of those receiving the award were in attendance, as well as members of the Beirut Memorial Chapter 642, Military Order of the Purple Heart (MOPH). For these Marines, receiving the award is a symbol of their sacrifice and inclusion in a brotherhood of heroes.

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HUNDREDS HONOR FALLEN CALIFORNIA MARINE



Even at seven years-old, Cpl. Christopher Singer knew he wanted to join the military. His family couldn't have been prouder when he enlisted in the Marine Corps after high school graduation. Last month, the 23 year-old was killed while conducting combat operations in Afghanistan with 3rd Combat Engineer Battalion, 1st Marine Division, I Marine Expeditionary Force. At a memorial service, attended by over a hundred family members, friends and community members, Patriot Guard Riders rode in on their motorcycles, carrying the American flag. At the conclusion of the service,

Singer's family was presented the Purple Heart. Singer leaves behind his wife and two year-

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old daughter Briyana. He was buried with full military honors.

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FALLEN SEATTLE MARINE'S LETTER BRINGS COMFORT, INSPIRATION



A fallen Marine's left-behind letter is bringing inspiration to many. Last week, 23-year-old Sgt. William Stacey was on foot patrol in Afghanistan when an enemy bomb went off, killing him; he was weeks away from returning home after five deployments. Stacey's letter weighs what would make dying in the line of duty worth it. "If my life buys the safety of a child who will one day change this world, then I know that it was all worth it," he wrote.

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[Read: Marines Memorialize Seattle Hero](#)

NEWS

AFGHAN BORDER POLICE, U.S. MARINE PARTNERSHIP FURTHERS GOVERNANCE IN SOUTHERN HELMAND



Marines from Weapons Company, 3rd Battalion, 3rd Marine Regiment have helped the Afghan Border Police (ABP) establish a government presence in the Garmsir district in Afghanistan, an area known for insurgent movement between Pakistan and Afghanistan. The ABP's mission is vital to the safety of the area once the Marines turn over full responsibility to Afghan forces. ABP patrolman Sgt. Khan Jan said the

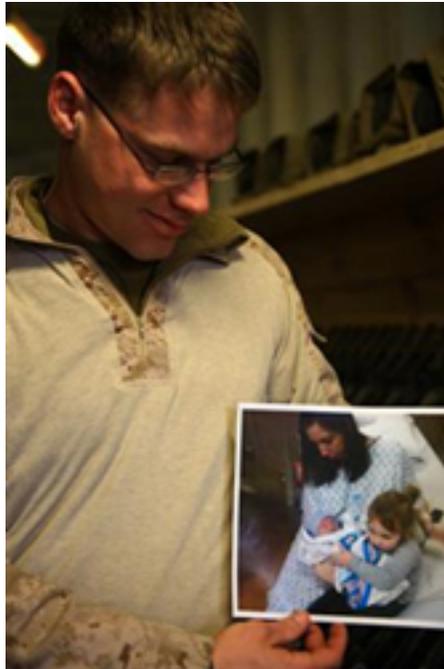


mentorship of the Marines has taught him more thoroughly about his responsibilities and how to carry out different facets of his job. He now has a better understanding of how to effectively conduct security patrols, process criminals, conduct searches and detect improvised explosive devices. "The ABP has introduced governance and the local people have embraced it," said Capt. Jason Armas, the commanding officer of Weapons Company. "They're helping the people to see they have to work through the government to solve problems between their tribes, and not take matters into their own hands." The skills of the ABP were recently put to the test when a member of one tribe in the area killed an elder from another tribe. Rather than allow animosity to spin out of control, the ABP caught the suspected killer and ensured that the situation was taken care of through the Afghan legal system.

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MICHIGAN MARINE WELCOMES SON TO WORLD VIA VIDEO CHAT IN AFGHANISTAN



Cpl. Joseph Schank's was able to support his wife and witness the birth of his second child, a son named Leland, on Jan. 26 via video chat while deployed in Afghanistan. "Being deployed and knowing that you are having a child is hard mentally and emotionally, but knowing what I get to come home to is what keeps me together," he said. Schank is a small arms repair technician with Marine Air-Ground Task Force Support Battalion 11.2, 2nd Marine Logistics Group (Forward). The Schanks have been married for three years and have a daughter as well. Although Schank hates to miss so many milestones because of his career, he applauded his wife for being a loving partner and caring mother.

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MARINE SERGEANT MAJOR SERVES WITH SON IN

AFGHANISTAN

While wrapping up a year-long tour in Afghanistan in January, Sgt. Maj. Henry Prutch hoped to see his Marine son who was also deployed to the area. As his father prepared to return home, Lance Cpl. Scott Prutch had begun his six-month tour.

"Seeing him wear this uniform, it's a good feeling, it makes me proud. Personally, you want the best for your kids, want them to succeed and be happy in life," said Sgt. Maj. Prutch, 2nd Marine Aircraft Wing (Forward). Sgt. Maj. Prutch serves as the senior enlisted advisor to Maj. Gen. Glenn M.

Walters, who is responsible for all Marine Corps combat aviation operations in southwestern Afghanistan. Lance Cpl. Prutch is a landing support specialist with Combat Logistics Battalion 4. The younger Prutch said his father's advice and support have given him confidence and knowledge as he begins his tour of Afghanistan.

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MARINE, SPOUSE RECEIVE AWARD FOR OUTSTANDING SERVICE TO COMMUNITY



Cpl. Francisco Rodriguez Hernandez Jr. and his wife, Jessica, were awarded the Service Family of the Quarter Award by the Havelock, N.C. Chamber of Commerce Military Affairs Committee on Jan. 31. Hernandez Jr. is the noncommissioned officer in charge of barracks managers for Marine Aircraft Group 14, and he and his wife volunteer at their church, base events and with Habitat for Humanity. "We are very passionate about what we do and we enjoy being able to give back to the community,"

said Jessica. The Hernandez family often volunteers together, giving hours of their free time to help others. Their mission is to "pay it forward" by putting others' needs before their own.

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FAMILY MATTERS BLOG: MILITARY KIDS CAN APPLY FOR SCHOLARSHIPS

Feb. 24 is the deadline for the Fisher House Foundation's 2012 Scholarships for Military Children Program. Currently enrolled or college-bound children of active duty, reserve or retired military commissary customers may apply. A minimum of one \$1,500 scholarship will be awarded at each of the 250 commissaries on military installations around the world. Applications can be picked up at a local commissary or downloaded from the program's website, and they must be delivered - not postmarked - to a commissary by close of business Feb. 24. To-date, the program has helped nearly 5,500 students with more than \$8 million in scholarship grants.

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OBAMA ANNOUNCES PROGRAM TO HIRE VETS AS FIRST RESPONDERS

On Feb. 3, President Barack Obama announced his commitment to introduce an initiative to hire veterans as the country's first responders, as he had previously proclaimed in his State of the Union address. His proposal would help communities hire veterans as police officers and firefighters. It would also encourage the hiring of veterans for projects such as restoring local communities and national parks. The president lauded the military members for their actions while serving, saying that their skills qualify them for any job. "They've saved lives in some of the



toughest conditions imaginable. They've managed convoys and moved tons of equipment over dangerous terrain. They've tracked millions of dollars of military assets. They've handled pieces of equipment that are worth tens of millions of dollars," he said." They do incredible work. Nobody is more skilled, more precise, more diligent, more disciplined." Already 600,000 veterans and their family members have been able to attend school on the Post-9/11 G.I. Bill and over 120,000 veterans have been hired in the federal government.

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TAX TIPS FOR TROOPS

Young service members have a new option to consider regarding taxes. The Thrift Savings Plan's (TSP) new Roth option allows service members and dependents to contribute after-tax dollars that grow tax-free and are not taxed upon withdrawal. A traditional TSP defers taxes on earned income until the money is withdrawn. The program allows for a maximum annual contribution of \$17,000. "The Roth TSP is a good option for service members who are paying less tax now than they expect to pay later," said Army Lt. Col Evan Stone, director of Armed Forces Tax Council. This tax season, there are minimal changes of which service members should aware. For example, though the pay for Imminent Danger Pay was changed from a \$225 per month to a per diem amount, it does not affect eligibility for tax exclusions. Those who would like assistance can get free tax preparation by IRS-trained volunteers at military installations around the world.



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RECOGNIZING 233 YEARS OF BLACK MARINES



As the United States celebrates Black History Month in February, the Marine Corps recognizes the contributions African-Americans have made in its history. Although the Corps did not officially accept African-Americans until World War II, a total of 13 black veterans are documented as



serving as Marines during the American Revolution. The first official black Marines began their careers 150 years later and trained at Montford Point Camp, N.C. from 1942 to 1949. Today, African-Americans

represent approximately 11 percent of the Marine Corps; there are four black major generals and approximately 27 percent of sergeants major are black. "Over the time I have served, I've been able to witness the Marine Corps diversify, especially in the senior enlisted ranks," said Maj. Gen. Anthony L. Jackson, Marine Corps Installations West commanding general. "I feel proud to be part of an organization that is always striving to do the right thing."

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