



MARINE CORPS TRIMS DOWN TO 'MIDDLEWEIGHT'



In September 2010, the Marine Corps formed the Force Structure Review Group to develop the organization, posture and capabilities of the Marine Corps for its role within the joint force in a fiscally constrained environment. The re-shaping of the Marine Corps reflects our historic role as the nation's crisis response force and provides unique capabilities to the joint force in terms of readiness, adaptability, flexibility and utility at an affordable cost. Some of the Force Structure

Review recommendations are a reduction in force structure from 202,000 to 186,800, when conditions in Afghanistan warrant, and the alignment of five joint task force capable, regionally-focused Marine Expeditionary Brigade command elements to improve ground combat effectiveness and speed of response. While some of the structure changes are already underway, the Marine Corps will not go down in force structure until after our commitment in Afghanistan. Whats next is a thorough doctrine, organization, training, leadership, and billeting review before finalizing the Force Structure Review.

[Read More >>](#)

IMPACT OF CONTINUING RESOLUTIONS



On Tuesday, Gen. James Amos, 35th Commandant of the Marine Corps, testified before the House Armed Services Committee. In his opening remarks, Amos outlined the impact the current continuing resolution has had on Marine Corps operations and programs. "As of today, \$567M in military construction contracts have not been awarded; \$2.4B of MILCON is at risk for the remainder of the year. These projects impact the lives of Marines ... the local economies of communities around our bases and stations ... and are projected

to generate over 63,000 jobs from the Carolinas to Hawaii. If the continuing resolution extends through the entire fiscal year, 13 bachelor enlisted quarters ... totaling 5,000 affected spaces ... will not be built, thus stymieing our BEQ modernization efforts. These 13 BEQs will allow eight infantry battalions to move out of 50- year-old cold war barracks. Finally, a continuing resolution could prove catastrophic to our procurement accounts, resulting in the loss of almost one-third of our procurement budget."

[Read More >>](#)

[Also Read: 2011 Report To The House Armed Services Committee >>](#)

NEWS

400 MARINES TO KEARSARGE



Pentagon officials said on Tuesday that an additional 400 Marines are being sent to join the amphibious assault ship Kearsarge near North Africa in response to the unrest in Lybia. The 400 Marines will be coming from 1st Battalion, 2nd Marines, Camp Lejeune, N.C. The Kearsarge deployed in August with an amphibious readiness group from the 26th Marine Expeditionary



Unit, most of those Marines have since deployed to Afghanistan. Defense Secretary Robert Gates

ordered the Kearsarge and the amphibious transport dock Ponce to move from the U.S. Central Command region into the Mediterranean Sea to provide the capability for evacuation or humanitarian aid. "We are obviously looking at a lot of options and contingencies," Gates said Tuesday at a Pentagon briefing.

[Read More >>](#)

Pictured above, U.S. Marines from the 24th Marine Expeditionary Unit prepare U.S. citizens to be loaded onto Marine Corps CH-53 helicopters heading to Cyprus following their departure from Beirut, Lebanon, July 19, 2006.

EXERCISE KEEPS MARINES ABOVE PAR



During a Mission Readiness Exercise (MRX) along Onslow Beach, the Ground Combat Element (GCE) of Security Cooperation Task Force Africa Partnership Station (SCTF) 2011 showed not only an effective fighting force, but also an invaluable tool in providing and spreading American diplomacy. The three-day exercise included much more than Amphibious Assault Vehicle (AAV) beach landings and dynamic launches from the task force's mother

vessel, the USS Whidbey Island. Securing a site and establishing an evacuation control center (ECC), were paramount in allowing the acting infantry element to effectively conduct training specifically tailored to noncombatant evacuation operations. "The MRX tested the Marines' ability to act independently with little supervision and to make sound decisions in rarely encountered situations," said Capt. Brian Vukelic, commanding officer of the GCE. Though diplomacy was a key player in the overall effectiveness of the exercise, it did not serve to undermine the SCTF's abilities as a fighting force.

[Read More >>](#)

[Also Read: From ship to shore, Marines conduct tactical raid >>](#)

BILATERAL TRAINING WITH CAMBODIAN SOLDIERS



More than 150 Marines and Sailors with the 31st Expeditionary Unit trained with Cambodian soldiers and Sailors. The training included classes on combat life saving skills, mine and improvised explosive device detection, mortar systems, and hand-to-hand fighting. While the Cambodians were learning about the U.S. Marine Corps weapons and tactics, the Marines and Sailors were learning new things too. "The more the Marines get a chance to pass their skills onto other service

members, Cambodian or U.S., the better and more comfortable they feel about their ability to do it," said Staff Sgt. Daniel B. Linden, a mortar section leader with BLT 2/5. "They are not just learning the ability to work with foreign militaries; they are learning the basic teaching skills that will allow them to pass their knowledge on to their Marines as well." The 31st MEU is the nation's only continually forward-deployed MEU and remains a force-in-readiness in the Asia-Pacific region.

[Read More >>](#)

POLICE TRAINING IN AFGHANISTAN



More than 250 recruits will arrive for training at the Police Training Center in the city of Qalat, and the Afghan Uniform Police (AUP) instructors will guide them through the six-week course. Five AUP officers greeted recruits as they stepped off the bus in Zabul Province. "This is our first class that we will train from start to finish," said Staff Sgt. Jose Ortiz, senior training mentor. Each student is registered into the Handheld

Interagency Identification Detection Equipment, or HIIDE system. The biometrics system is used to verify identity. It scans the iris, takes fingerprints and loads the data for future use. If a person has been arrested, the

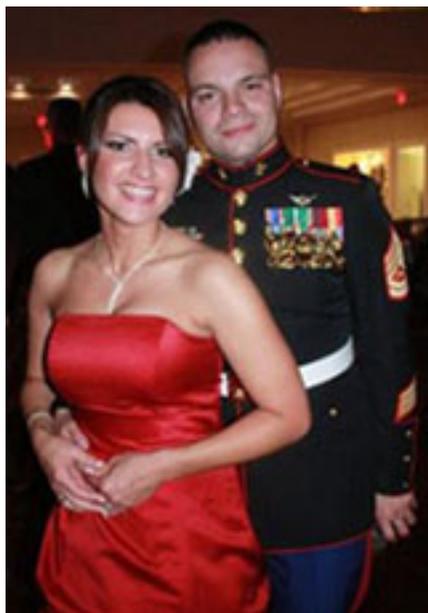
information will show up on the system when the biometrics are taken, as long as biometrics were taken at the time of arrest.

[Read More >>](#)

[Read Also: Afghan Army poised to fight roadside bombs >>](#)

[Watch the commander of Regional Command South-West, Maj. Gen. Richard Mills, providing the Pentagon press corps an update on operations in Afghanistan >>](#)

MARINE SPOUSE OF THE YEAR



Bianca Strzalkowski was selected as the 2011 Marine Spouse of the Year. The selection for the award is based on volunteer work, education and impact on the community. "I was up against very impressive women," said Strzalkowski, a mother of three. "To have an honor like representing the finest branch of the military was overwhelming. There is so much I want to accomplish for families on independent duty and this will be my opportunity to do so." She has played her role as a supportive Marine wife throughout her husband's career in the Corps. Strzalkowski was a key Volunteer Coordinator for Marine Heavy Helicopter Squadron 461 at Marine Corps Air Station New River, N.C. Additionally, she was also a key volunteer at MCAS Yuma, Ariz., where she cooked for families in need, helped families with newborn babies and assisted families affected by a helicopter crash. She is now in the running with spouses from the other military branches of the United States to be named Military

Spouse of the Year. If she wins, she will be honored in Washington, D.C., on May 5.

[Read More >>](#)

FIRST WOUNDED WARRIOR TRIALS



At the inaugural Marine Corps Trials, wounded warriors from all over the world did not let their injuries deter their will to compete. More than 150 wounded, ill and injured Marines, Marine veterans and international Marines arrived at Camp Pendleton, Calif., Feb. 17-27 to participate in the trials, which serve as a preliminary



competition to the annual Warrior Games scheduled for May 16-25 in Colorado Springs, Colo. The Marine Corps Trials featured the same sports

as the Warrior Games: swimming, track and field, sitting volleyball, wheelchair basketball, shooting, archery, and cycling. The training and competition during the Trials was fierce, with athletes vying for top placement in team and individual sports. The athletes were divided into four teams: East, West, Veteran and Allied. The Allied team had service members from the British Royal Marine Corps, Australian Defence Force and the Royal Netherlands Marine Corps. The four teams fiercely competed against each other. The Veterans team finished in first place, with the West, East and Allied teams placing second, third and fourth respectively.

[Read More >>](#)

[Also read Wounded Warrior Regiment announces All-Marine Warrior Games team >>](#)

DAUGHTER DELIVERED IN PARKING LOT



Staff Sgt. Johnathon M. Waytas and his wife pulled over into an empty parking lot about halfway to the hospital, which had discharged them only a few hours before because "labor was not imminent." Waytas, aviation ordnance instructor with the Center for Naval Aviation Technical Training Marine Unit Cherry Point, said he wondered if they would be able to make it. "I knew I was going to have my baby," said Waytas' wife, Bethani. He speedily began adjusting the seats, pushing the automatic tilt and back buttons at the same time, positioning his wife in as comfortable a position as their Jeep Commander would permit. "I went ahead and delivered the baby and got back on the phone with dispatch to ask what to do next," Waytas stated. The couple gave birth to a healthy baby girl, Krisily, and his wife set a land speed record for delivery.

[Read More >>](#)

LT. GEN. KELLY NAMED SENIOR MILITARY ASSISTANT

On Tuesday, Defense Secretary Robert Gates nominated Lt. Gen. John Kelly to be his senior military assistant. In this position, Kelly will be a key liaison between the defense



secretary and the top leadership in the military. He is currently the Commanding General of Marine Forces Reserve and Marine Forces North, having assumed command in October 2009. As a Brigadier General in 2002 serving with the 1st Marine Division as the Assistant Commander, much of his two-year assignment was spent deployed to Iraq. He then returned to Headquarters Marine Corps as the Legislative Assistant to the Commandant from 2004 to 2007. Promoted to Major General, he returned to Camp Pendleton as the Commanding General, I Marine Expeditionary Force (Forward). The command deployed to Iraq in early 2008 for a year-long mission as Multinational Force-West in Al Anbar and western Ninewa provinces.



[View Lt. Gen. Kelly's official biography >>](#)

HEROES OF THE WEEK

22ND MEU MARINES HONORED



Five Marines with the 22nd Marine Expeditionary Unit received medals Monday for valor in combat while deployed to the Helmand Province in Afghanistan with 2nd Battalion, 2nd Marine Regiment, Regimental Combat Team 7, 1st Marine Division (Fwd) from late 2009 to mid-2010. Lt. Gen. John M. Paxton, Jr., commanding general for II Marine Expeditionary Force, presented each Marine with his medal. "The 2/2 has always been a great unit," he said. "These great Marines ... they showed confidence in their equipment, training and fellow Marines." Sgt. Joseph M. Perez was awarded the Silver Star. Bronze Star medals, each with the combat "V" distinguishing device for bravery in combat, were awarded to four Marines: Lance Cpl. Lance J. Carney, 1st Sgt. Christopher J. Adams, Sgt. Maj. William Heyob, and Capt. Brandon J. Gorman.

[Read More >>](#)

Information above provided by the Marine Corps Times. Photo provided by the Jacksonville Daily News. Pictured above Lt. Gen. John M. Paxton Jr., Commanding General, II Marine Expeditionary Force, speaks with Marines of the 22nd Marine Expeditionary Unit.

MARINE ACCEPTS PURPLE HEART



This week, Greg Jaffe of the *Washington Post* reported that in mid-February, Lt. Gen. John F. Kelly received word that Lance Cpl. Sebastian Gallegos, one of his son's Marines from Afghanistan, had declined to accept the Purple Heart he had earned. Gallegos's right arm was severed in the October bomb blast that killed his squad leader, Sgt. Ian M. Tawney, 25. The 21-year-old Marine couldn't fathom accepting an honor for an event that had taken his friend's life. Gallegos was lying next to a mortally wounded Tawney as the

helicopter left Sangin. "I told him I loved him and watched him die," Gallegos recalled. A few weeks later, Tawney's wife gave birth to a baby girl. Kelly offered to fly to Brooke Army Medical Center in San Antonio, Tx., where Gallegos was being treated, to present the award. Gallegos told him it wasn't necessary. "Robert would want you to have it," Kelly insisted over the phone. The ceremony was held in a prefabricated building on the hospital campus.

[Read More >>](#)

Photo by Nikki Kahn- Pictured above, Lt. Gen. John F. Kelly congratulates Lance Cpl. Sebastian Gallegos after presenting the Marine with a Purple Heart at Brooke Army Medical Center in San Antonio.

EVENTS

MARDI GRAS PARADES IN NEW ORLEANS

The Marine Forces Reserve Band, 2nd Marine Division Band, and the Parris Island Marine Band have joined to support dozens of Mardi Gras parades and related events throughout New Orleans and the surrounding area during the first two weeks in March.

[See all Mardi Gras events >>](#)

ALBANY BAND TO PERFORM IN ST. LOUIS

The Albany Marine Band is performing in and around St. Louis, Mo., from March 3-14. Marine Band members will participate in the [St. Louis Mardi Gras Parade](#), the [Fat Tuesday Parade](#), and the [St. Patrick's Day Parade](#). Additionally they will also participate in community outreach events, such as visiting local high schools and youth centers, in order to generate

awareness for Marine Week St. Louis (June 20-26).
