



II MEF TAKES HELM IN AFGHANISTAN

In a ceremony at Camp Leatherneck, Afghanistan, Maj. Gen. John A. Toolan, Commanding General of II Marine Expeditionary Force, assumed command of the Regional Command Southwest, which includes the Helmand and Nimroz provinces.

Toolan took command from Maj. Gen. Richard P. Mills, the Commanding General of I MEF. "It's been an honor and privilege to serve with the caliber of troops we had work under us and with the command we've had over our heads, but most importantly it's been

an honor and privilege to serve with our Afghan brothers," said Mills. "[They] have come a long way through hard work, courage, and perseverance and I believe they will succeed." Regional Command Southwest conducts counter-insurgency operations in partnership with the government of the Islamic Republic of Afghanistan in order to protect the Afghan people, develop governance, and develop the capabilities of the Afghan National Security Forces. "We, the coalition forces, and the warriors of Afghanistan are taking the fight to the enemy and driving them from among us. I plan to build upon and continue the successes of Maj.



Gen. Mills. We will continue to support the great people of Afghanistan and their way of life," said Toolan.

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JOB WELL-DONE MARINES

Marines and Sailors with I Marine Expeditionary Force (FWD) are returning home from a year-long deployment to Helmand province, Afghanistan. I MEF (FWD) deployed during the spring last year and assumed command of all Marine operations throughout southern Afghanistan, making it the largest Marine-led command in Afghanistan since the war began nearly a decade ago. The Camp Pendleton-based unit made history when it raised the NATO flag in July 2010, officially standing up



as Regional Command Southwest, the sixth International Security Assistance Force Regional Command in Afghanistan. This signified the unification of all international security forces in southwest Afghanistan and provided improved operational oversight of Helmand and Nimroz provinces. Maj. Gen. Richard P. Mills became the first U.S. Marine to command a NATO regional command in combat. I MEF (FWD) Marines disrupted the tactics, techniques, and procedures of the Taliban by re-organizing the battlefield to the point where they could no longer recognize what had been in place for decades. I MEF FWD was also responsible for training Afghan Army and Police recruits at the Joint Security Academy Southwest on Camp Leatherneck. As a result, Marjah, the once volatile district, opened its first police station in September and was manned by JSAS-trained policemen. Marjah residents experienced increased security throughout their local community. The Marines and Sailors arrived home throughout March, welcomed by family and friends who are ready to put an official end to the deployment.

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DID YOU KNOW?

That retired four-star Marine Corps Commandant Gen. Charles C. Krulak, 69, recently became the President of Birmingham-Southern College. Birmingham-Southern College is a four-year, private liberal arts institution in Birmingham, Alabama. Upon arrival in Nov. at the security gate to the school, Krulak peppered the guard with questions about the school. The guard asked him for identification and Krulak complied. He took the job to serve as a role model and inspiration to youth, Krulak said. "My wife and I have both been spending time with the students," he said. "We want to energize and provide hope and vision." Krulak declined a salary for the first year, and also declined a car. "The rationale is not because I'm rich," he said. "You don't get rich on a Marine's salary." He said he wanted to boost morale for those who are still suffering from budget cuts at the school.

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NEWS

MARINES SENT TO JAPAN FOR NUCLEAR RESPONSE



To assist the ongoing nuclear crisis, Marines with the Chemical Biological Incident Response Force (CBIRF) are scheduled to arrive in Japan today. A military official characterized the deployment as "prudent planning," a precautionary move to have the Marines on hand if needed, not an emergency. "They would provide radiological expertise to the on-scene commander and, if needed, to the Japan Self-Defense Forces in the areas of medical, logistical, chemical, biological, nuclear and hazardous

materials," the official said. The CBIRF team is trained in identifying chemical agents, monitoring radiation levels and decontaminating personnel. The deployment of the 155 Marines was requested by U.S. Pacific Command and the newly-established Joint Support Force that oversees the overall U.S. military quake and tsunami relief effort in Japan. CBIRF is considered a national asset, and remains the only battalion with more than 400 active-

duty Marines and Sailors dedicated to chemical, biological, radiological, nuclear, and high-yield explosive incident consequence management in the military. CBIRF is able to sustain rescue operations for up to three days, equipped with resources like a technical rescue platoon, medical section, and identification and detection platoon.

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NAVY-MARINE CORPS TEAM BRINGS CRUCIAL DISASTER RELIEF TO ISOLATED ISLAND

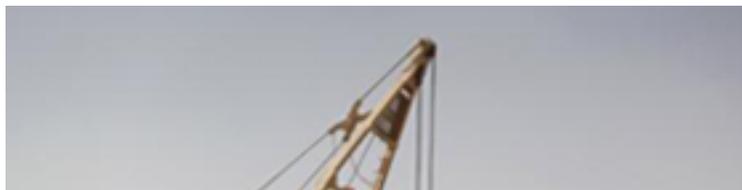


This week, Marines and Sailors with the 31st Marine Expeditionary Unit and Amphibious Squadron 11 delivered nearly 2,000 gallons of water, 1,738 meals ready to eat and 136 tarps to a Oshima Island, located off the northeast coast of Japan. The isolated island has been without running water and electricity since the March 11 massive earthquake and tsunami. In addition to delivering humanitarian aid, Marines and Sailors transported local electrical utility vehicles to assist with restoring power to the isolated

community. "We have 450 displaced people here on the island. These trucks will help us provide power for the displaced persons' shelters, and the remaining homes, so they can have heat and light. It is an extreme honor to have the Marines here, we did not expect it, and we are so thankful," Sasaki Masaetsu, maintenance manager, said. As happy as the Japanese were to receive the supplies, the Marines and Sailors of the 31st MEU were just as happy to lend a helping hand. The 31st MEU's involvement is part of a larger U.S. government response.

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ADAPTING AND OVERCOMING OBSTACLES



Marines with the Assault Breacher Vehicle (ABV) platoon, 1st Combat Engineer Battalion adapt and overcome obstacles on a regular basis. "These vehicles require a lot of



time and effort to keep them running," Sgt. Ricky Johnson, ABV maintainer from Ganado, Ariz said. In the battle against improvised explosive devices (IED), the ABV has become an indispensable tool. Equipped with a plow on the front end, the ABV can dig a lane for follow-on forces to proceed to their objective safely. It is also

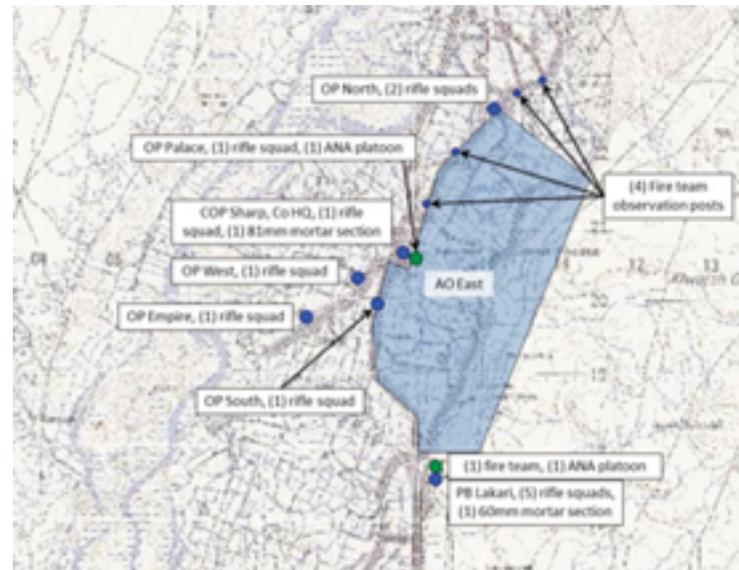
capable of firing mine-clearing line charges in areas where the threat of IEDs is high. Even though there are Marines specified as ABV mechanics who make necessary repairs, operators have also had to learn to repair their own vehicles due to the amount of work required to properly maintain them. "We've gotten a lot faster at doing maintenance," Cpl. James Gunsolus, operator from Bakersfield said. "Some things that used to take us a day, we can get done in a few hours, especially when we are doing a mission; it gives you a real sense of urgency."

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IMPORTANCE OF PATROL BASE OUTCASTS

The Marine Corps Gazette is the official journal of the United States Marine Corps. Each month a print edition is published along with articles selectively posted to their website. As part of an agreement between the Gazette and the Marine Corps Connection, we will begin featuring articles that have been made available to the public. In this article, Capt Luis Perez conveys the importance of a Patrol Base as part of counterinsurgency operations in southern Afghanistan. Drawing from his first-hand account, Perez writes about how his Marines, working with

his Afghan National Army partners, established a Patrol Base referred to as PB Outcast. Perez firmly believes that establishing and operating out of this Patrol Base exponentially increased the platoon's and therefore the company's effectiveness. He writes, by adhering to and adapting what we learned when establishing and operating out of PB Outcast to your



unit's specific situation, I believe your unit will be set up for success when conducting patrol base operations in southern Afghanistan."

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IRAQ AMBASSADOR SPEAKS OF GRATITUDE TO US, MEETS WITH MARINE CASUALTY'S MOM



Samir Shakir Mahmood Sumaida'ie, Iraq's ambassador to the United States, gave a message of gratitude and a plea for more U.S. investment in rebuilding his war-torn nation. According to The Washington Post, the 66-year-old diplomat spoke about democracy-building in postwar Iraq at St. Michael's College in Vermont. He also met with Iraqis who settled in the state as part of a refugee resettlement program before traveling to the Vermont capital to speak at the Statehouse. "Together with Iraqis,

American soldiers men and women fought to free the country and to build a new political system which is based on freedom and human rights. Through you, I would like to express the gratitude of all Iraqis for the sacrifices made by so many American families. The sacrifice made by the families, those who lost loved ones. We will remember them forever as saviors," he said. Rep. Vicki Strong (R-Albany) approached Sumaida'ie at the podium and told him it was a privilege for her son to have served his country in addition to helping them take "those baby steps to freedom." Strong's son, Marine Corps Sgt. Jesse Strong, 24, lost his life during an ambush in Anbar Province. "Actually, Jesse died securing the polls for their very first free Iraqi election," Strong said. "When my son's body was being shipped here to us, the Iraqi people stepped out of their homes for the first time to vote. Sumaida'ie said that with time, America's sacrifices will gain more meaning. "We are sorry and saddened of her loss. We will remember her son and all those who fell fighting for Iraq and our freedom." he said.

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[See Also: Marine receives award on behalf of hero mother >>](#)

HELPING FIGHT HUNGER

Thirty Marines from Marine Aviation Logistics Squadron 16, Marine Corps Air Station Miramar, assisted with the grand opening of the Feeding America San Diego's new warehouse. The Marine volunteers came to the warehouse a week before its grand opening to help clean, organize and prepare for its celebration. "If we get one or two Marines here, they'll do the work of 20 volunteers," Tim Ney, chief operations officer at Feeding America San Diego, said. Turner explained that Marines bring military discipline and efficiency whenever they volunteer in community service. Feeding America San Diego distributes food to more than 175 charitable organizations and feeds 73,000 children, families and seniors each week, which includes military families. The new warehouse can move 16 million pounds of food each year, but this feat cannot be accomplished without efficient and well-organized help.

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In order to reduce post-military underemployment, Troop Transition trains and certifies military service members to industry-defined employment specifications. Troop Transition operates the [Troops-2-Truckers](#), [Troops-2-Roughness](#), and [Troops-2-Energy](#) programs aboard 29 Palms, Calif., Camp Lejeune, N.C., Camp Pendleton, Calif., and it will soon expand to Quantico, Va. With instructors carrying more than 220 years of combined experience, Troop Transition provides students with an exceptional training environment and offers a host of credentials that employers actively seek in the renewable energy, trucking, and drilling job market. To learn more about the programs, please contact 760.579.0800 or visit

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HEROES OF THE WEEK

RECOGNITION FOR ACTIONS IN AFGHANISTAN

Thirteen Marines with 8th Engineer Support Battalion, 2nd Marine Logistics Group, were awarded various medals, including five Purple Hearts, two Navy and Marine Corps Commendation Medals and six Navy and Marine Corps Achievement Medals during an award ceremony at Camp Lejeune, N.C. on March 24. The Marines range in rank from private first class to captain. At the ceremony, Combat Logistics Battalion 2 (CLB-2) also was recognized. CLB-2 received the Force Preservation Award for outstanding safety programs and taking on force preservation initiatives during Operation Enduring Freedom. CLB-2 was deployed to Afghanistan in support of International Security Assistance Forces from July 2010 to February 2011.



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HOW TO REQUEST COLOR GUARD SUPPORT



Each year, the Marine Corps Color Guard supports approximately 300 events. The Color Guard is a four-person formation of Marines in military uniform that post and retire the flag and render to it the proper customs and courtesies. During ceremonies, the Color Guard presents the flags of the United States and that of the Marine Corps, the flags are flanked by two rifle-bearers. A salute is rendered by dipping the Marine Corps flag while holding the National Ensign high. Events supported by the Marine Corps

Color Guard include but are not limited to sporting, military appreciation, and patriotic events. If you are interested in requesting the Marine Corps Color Guard, visit the Community Relations section of www.marines.mil and fill out a standard Department of Defense form 2536.

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