



## MARINES FROM CAMP PENDLETON DEPART FOR AFGHANISTAN

Emotions were high as Marines from Camp Pendleton, Calif., said goodbye to loved ones as they boarded buses and headed towards deployment to Afghanistan on Feb. 27. The Camp Pendleton Marines will assume command of western forces in Helmand province, a former Taliban stronghold. Their mission while overseas is to defeat the Taliban and support friendly Afghan forces. "It's going to be a hard year," said Maj. Gen. Charles "Mark" Gurganus.



Prior to the Marines' departure, spouses made plans for staying in contact and coping with their loved ones departure. "You stay busy and you never stop praying that the Lord will bring them all home safely," said Grace Rodriguez, whose husband, Master Sgt. Hector Rodriguez served in three deployments to Iraq. Some spouses spend the deployment with their extended families; that's the plan for Katy Gillen, wife of Cpl. Jeff Gillen, who is six months pregnant with their first child. Other couples are experiencing their first deployment. Lance Cpl. Jo Le was in elementary school when the war in the Middle East began. "Now it's my turn to go," he said while saying goodbye to his girlfriend. Though Marines in Afghanistan have made considerable progress, they still face the task of garnering support

for the Afghan government among its people, training the Afghan army and police and convincing farmers not to grow the poppy crop that sustains the drug trade and the Taliban.

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## HEROES

### AFTER LONG WAIT, WASHINGTON STATE VETERAN GETS PURPLE HEART

Nearly eight years after a tragic day in Iraq, veteran Marine Lance Cpl. Kenneth McAllister received a Purple Heart medal for wounds he suffered on April 1, 2003. McAllister was struck by shrapnel in a firefight on the way to Baghdad with his tank battalion. Sen. Maria Cantwell, D-Wash., spoke at the ceremony on Feb. 21 on Joint Base Lewis-McChord, Wash. She commented on McAllister's brave actions, saying, "He did not abandon his post, and the rest of his tank crew pushed through. His award is a very small but very important gesture saying "thank you." He reflected and remembered those who didn't come home, saying, "For the Marines that lost their lives for us, my heart just cries out for them."

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### MARINE SAVES FELLOW MARINE, RECEIVES COMMENDATION MEDAL

Sgt. Jeremy Caddell happened to be in the right place at the right time. The deputy family readiness officer, Marine Wing Communications Squadron 38, and his fiancée were driving in San Diego when



they noticed an accident at an intersection. Caddell rushed over to help the victim, who turned out to be Gunnery Sgt. Dave Smith, training chief, Headquarters and Service Battalion, Marine Corps Recruit Depot San Diego. Smith had just been hit by a drunk driver who fled the scene. "[Caddell] rolled me over, cleared my airway and helped keep me [resuscitated] until paramedics arrived," said Smith. "Once the firefighters got on scene he helped a volunteer firefighter roll me over onto the stretchers." Smith was able to leave the hospital three weeks later thanks to Caddell's timely action. Caddell was awarded the Navy and Marine Corps Commendation Medal aboard Marine Corps Air Station Miramar on Feb. 15.



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## NEWS

### MARINE CORPS UNVEILS F-35B



The F-35B Lightning II officially rolled out in a ceremony, hosted by Marine Fighter Attack Training Squadron 501 (VMFAT-501), on Feb. 24 on Eglin Air Force Base (AFB), Fla. "VMFAT-501 is at the forefront of one of the most significant transition periods in Marine aviation history," noted Gen. Joseph Dunford, assistant commandant of the Marine Corps and presiding officer for the historic event. "The ability to combine supersonic flight and radar-evading stealth with the short take-off and vertical-landing capability needed aboard an amphibious

warship is among the greatest innovations the aviation community, much less Marine aviation has ever known." Each service's aviation branch will train maintainers and pilots for the aircraft at the F-35 Academic Training Center at Eglin AFB. The F-35B will support the Marine Air-Ground Task Force, providing close air support with its ability to operate from amphibious warships.

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## AFGHAN SOLDIERS RUN PATROL BASE, SECURE LOCAL AREA

When the Marines from 2nd Platoon, India Company, 3rd Battalion, 7th Marine Regiment arrived in Helmand province, Afghanistan, several weeks ago, they were surprised to find the Afghan National Army's (ANA) soldiers were already equipped with all of the skills necessary for security operations, including patrolling, navigating and communicating. This allowed for the Marines to quickly transfer control of Hanjar Yak to the 3rd Tolai, 2nd Kandak, 2nd Brigade, 215th ANA. "Violence in Sangin has decreased significantly since the people in the province have begun working with the ANA to keep the area safe," said ANA Staff Sgt. Mahfazullah, the Hanjar Yak commander, 3rd Tolai, 2nd Kandak. "I think the ANA soldiers will be able to handle whatever comes at them," said 2nd Lt. Brian Darcy, 1st Platoon commander, India Co.

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## MARINES SWEEP UNCHARTED AREAS DURING OPERATION HIGHLAND THUNDER

The southern portion of Khan-Neshin district, Afghanistan, is home to local farmers who make a living far from the more developed districts of Helmand province. But insurgents have also begun moving into the area to escape the growing influence of Afghan National Security Forces. Marines and Sailors of 1st Light Armored Reconnaissance (LAR) Battalion and India Company, 3rd Battalion, 3rd



Marine Regiment, swept more than 300 square kilometers of southern Khan-Neshin district during Operation Highland



Thunder, Feb. 15-22. The operation was conducted to prepare the area for further counterinsurgency operations by Afghan forces. "The number one thing we're doing is disrupting the enemy to set the conditions for the arrival of the Afghan Border Police," said Capt. Sean Williams, Alpha Company commander, 1st LAR. "We're doing that by conducting a lot of dismounted patrols in the green zone, where everybody lives." The Marines and Sailors established two patrol bases and led dismounted patrols to search for insurgent activity, weapons and drug caches.

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## 31ST MARINE EXPEDITIONARY UNIT LENDS A HAND IN THAILAND

After completing Exercise Cobra Gold 2012, Marines and Sailors with the 31st Marine Expeditionary Unit (MEU) spent time on Feb. 22 conducting community service in Thailand. Among service projects, Marines and Sailors of Battalion Landing Team (BLT) 1st Battalion, 4th Marines, removed brush and undergrowth from a home for the elderly. Clearing the brush prevented fire ants from entering the facility and allowed in more sunlight. At the same time, Marines of Combat Logistics Battalion 31 removed rocks and cultivated land for future use as gardens at a local child protection and



development center. "The whole thing went great," said Lance Cpl. Matthew Howell, a field artillery fire direction controlman with Battery L, BLT 1/4, 31st MEU. "We did some physical work then got to interact with the residents. It was a great experience, they really appreciated us being out here and I was glad to be able to help them."

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[Also read: 31st MEU Marines and Sailors Entertain Orphans in Thailand](#)

## FLORIDA MEN AMONG THOSE WHO INTEGRATED MARINE CORPS

On Feb. 26, Edward Norman, Alpha Gainous, and George McIvory of Jacksonville, Fla., were recognized for their achievements in integrating the Marine Corps. The three men are members of the Montford Point Marines, who trained at Montford Point, N.C., in the 1940s, not at Camp Lejeune, N.C., where white Marines trained. The men remember the training as rough, but showed the dedication to prove that they were qualified to serve in the Marine Corps. "I look back with pride and joy knowing I was able to stand the test," said Norman. "To prove we could stand and be worthy." The almost 500 Montford Point Marines who are still living will receive the Congressional Gold Medal from President Barack Obama at the White House in the spring.

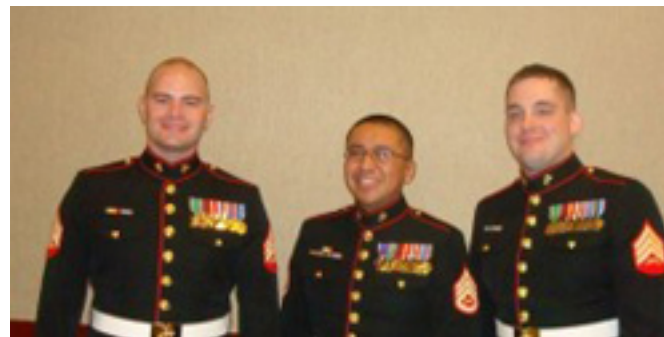
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## A MARINE FINDS A GOOD FIT FOR HIS LIFE GOALS IN THE CORPS

Staff Sgt. Michael McCabe is only 29 years old and has already served 11 years with the Marine Corps and completed three tours in Iraq. For the past two years, he has been on recruiting duty, but he will soon become the platoon sergeant of about 50 Marines at Camp Lejeune. His family is supportive of his Marine Corps career, though they are concerned for him when he deploys overseas. McCabe enlisted following high school, he says about being a Marine, "The challenging part is really what caught my eye. There's no other place like it to gain the experience, to go see places," he said. "The Marine Corps definitely shows what your body and your mind really is capable of. The standards are set high so that you can push yourself and make yourself a better person."

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# DOD TAKES STEPS TO REMOVE SPOUSE EMPLOYMENT BARRIERS

The Department of Defense (DOD) has prioritized easing employment challenges for military spouses with occupational licenses as one of its top issues for 2012. The military lifestyle includes multiple relocations and states' varying licensure requirements often become barriers for spouses seeking employment in their new location. More than 35 percent of military spouses in the workforce are in nearly 50 professions that require a license or certification, according to a new Military Spouse Employment Report, produced by the Defense and Treasury departments. The study also found that military spouses are 10 times more likely to have moved across state lines in the past year, compared to their civilian counterparts. A

lack of license portability — the ability to transfer an existing license to a new state with minimal application requirements — can become an administrative and financial burden in the attempt to obtain a license. "Military spouses want careers, and to the extent that that need isn't satisfied, they can become very unhappy being a military spouse," said Ed Kringer, director of state liaison and educational opportunity for the Pentagon's office of military community and family policy. "And if they're unhappy, their spouse will be unhappy being a military member." States can help break down these barriers by endorsing a current license from another state as long as the requirements are substantially similar; providing a temporary license for use while fulfilling state requirements; and expediting application procedures.

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## THANK YOU

## MARINE DAUGHTER RECEIVES SERVICE DOG

Eighteen-year-old Savannah Salazar, daughter of veteran Marine Corps Gunnery Sgt. Ruben Salazar, has suffered from epileptic seizures since she was two years old. On Feb. 23, Milk-Bone Brand and Canine Assistants held a ceremony on Camp Pendleton, Calif., to provide Salazar with a specially-trained service dog. "What the dog will be great for is offering her some independence," said Savannah's mother, Tracy Salazar. "You can imagine someone who has seizures every day -- she's unable to do the things that other 18-year-olds do."



The dog will act as an early-warning system, recognizing and alerting Salazar to an oncoming seizure. The Salazars expect that their daughter's quality of life will improve. Salazar and her dog will complete a two-week training course during which they will get to know each other while the dog learns how to react to signs of an approaching seizure.

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## EVENTS

### ON LEAP DAY, REGISTER FOR MARINE CORPS HISTORIC HALF FOR CHANCE TO WIN PRIZE PACKAGE



"Take a leap" today and register for the Marine Corps Historic Half marathon and get a chance to win an exclusive prize package. One runner will be randomly chosen as the Leap Day prize package winner and receive two Historic Half VIP passes, two runner's hats and the opportunity to wear bib #1775, for the year in which the Marine Corps was established, during the Historic Half. Registration for the Marine Corps Historic Half marathon is available at [www.marinemarathon.com](http://www.marinemarathon.com). Thousands of runners from across the United States will participate in the 13.1 mile





event on Sunday, May 20.

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