

# THIRD BATTALION

# FIRST MARINES

March 2010

Volume 1, Issue 4

## Special Interest

- Follow the links below to your company page.
- Submit suggestions to the FRO to help improve our newsletter.

## Company Highlights:

<a href="#">H&amp;S News</a>	<a href="#">2</a>
<a href="#">KILO News</a>	<a href="#">3</a>
<a href="#">INDIA News</a>	<a href="#">4</a>
<a href="#">LIMA News</a>	<a href="#">5</a>
<a href="#">WPNS News</a>	<a href="#">6</a>



## Battalion Commander LtCol Benjamin T. Watson



## Message

Dear Family and Friends of 3<sup>rd</sup> Battalion, 1<sup>st</sup> Marines,

Happy New Year to you and your families! I hope you all enjoyed a safe holiday season with your Marines and Sailors. As you know, we've been busy since our return from holiday leave. This past month, we deployed once again to 29 Palms, CA to participate in our most important pre-deployment exercise to date and final evaluation, Enhanced Mojave Viper (EMV). As we have throughout our training, the Thundering Third team performed exceptionally well and thoroughly impressed those who evaluated us. We went to 29 Palms a very good battalion, and we returned even better. I am very proud of all that our Marines and Sailors have accomplished, and can assure you that we are ready for the challenging deployment that lies ahead.

During the next few weeks, we will continue our training to ensure we maintain the fighting spirit and high level of proficiency that we displayed at EMV. We will also ensure that all of our men complete the required administrative and medical preparation for deployment, to include ensuring that all of our records are up to date. Please ensure you have talked to Paul Walters, our family readiness officer, to ensure that he has your most current contact information so we can keep you informed throughout our deployment.

We are still on track to deploy in mid-April, although we will deploy an advance party with some of our Marines and Sailors in early April to ensure everything is ready for the rest of us when we arrive. In the meantime, we have a block leave period of about two weeks to look forward to prior to our departure, and you should have received those leave dates from your Marine/Sailor and through the battalion family readiness officer.

I want to emphasize how much of a privilege it is to serve with each of your Marines and Sailors and to know that we have such a strong team of family and friends behind us. We are as well trained as any battalion ever has been for the upcoming deployment, and I know that we will make you proud. Have a safe and enjoyable leave period with your families, and thank you for your continued support of our Marines, Sailors, and the entire Thundering Third team! Semper Fidelis.



## Special Interest

- "I look forward to seeing as many of you that can attend our family brief on 25 March"

## Battalion Sergeant Major SgtMaj Scott A. Samuels



### Message

Family and friends of the Thundering Third, a lot has been happening with the battalion since our last chat. Once again, your Marines and Sailors have set the gold standard for the rest of the division, and I could not be more proud to be part of this fine outfit. I hope all of you had a rewarding holiday season and spent some quality time with your husbands, sons, and friends.

As many of you are aware, the battalion was deployed to Twenty-nine Palms, California for our final training test, called Enhanced Mojave Viper. As mentioned above, the men of the Thundering Third showed its true colors in the desert setting a new mark for infantry battalions training for Operation Enduring Freedom. Many long, cold, and wet hours were spent honing our skills in live fire, close air support, combined arms integration, and the all important counter insurgency training. I am still amazed at how quickly our men are able to go from a violent situation to sitting down with "local elders" and drinking tea while discussing the concerns of the villagers. It takes a special type of person to stay the course and remain professional in a chaotic situation, and we have them!

As we now prepare the battalion for deployment, this is the most critical time for both the Marines/Sailors and their families. I ask each of you to please be patient and we will get your men out on pre-deployment leave as scheduled; we still have some training events to complete though prior to this happening. I look forward to seeing as many of you that can attend our family brief on 25 March. This brief is designed for the families with the sole purpose to ensure no one leaves that evening without a clear understanding of what to expect over the upcoming deployment.

As we draw closer to the leave period, I know we are all focusing on some well deserved time off. With the families and friends of the battalion, together we can ensure our Marines and Sailors are as prepared, re-freshed, and focused to accomplish the demanding mission that lays ahead of us. The writer John Bunyan maintained, "You have not lived today successfully unless you've done something for someone who can never repay you." In a lot of ways, that sentiment is what this mission is all about. Keep us all in your thoughts and prayers, as we will you.

Semper Fidelis!



## Dear Family And Friends

Dear 3/1 Headquarters and Service Company Family. My name is 1stLt Eric Kjono, and I have come to 3/1 to command Headquarters and Service Company. I have seen the Marines and Sailors of this company in action at EMV, and I know that they are a professional, well-led unit, and I am greatly honored to lead them on our deployment in support of Operation Enduring Freedom. Here's an overview of their activities during the past few months.



Motor T Marines hone combat marksmanship (COINFEX)

During the first two weeks of December the Marines and Sailors of H&S Company conducted a fast-paced training package in preparation for deployment. The company's training was part of the Battalion's counter insurgency field exercise (COINFEX). The objective of this training was to increase the individual Marine's proficiency in machine gun employment, defense, pre combat actions, patrolling, combat marksmanship, Afghan culture,

combat trauma treatment, vehicle and entry control points, threat weapons, and IED defeat. Following Christmas leave block 3/1 traveled to Marine Corps Air Ground Combat Training Center, 29 Palms, CA to complete the Enhanced Mojave Viper (EMV) training package. Early in the robust training package, Motor Transportation, Truck Platoon, and Personal Security Detachment (PSD) Marines conducted a .50 caliber and MK-19 machine gun range, enhancing their own capabilities with their weapons systems.

Additionally the company's M-203 gunners shot on an unknown distance range, which challenged them to effectively engage multiple targets at varying distances. Later during EMV, Truck Platoon and PSD Platoon conducted a series of ranges culminating in a live fire motorized operations course that evaluated both units' ability to properly react to IEDs and small arms ambushes.

Your Marines and Sailors were true professionals during the execution of EMV and COINFEX. The high-paced, demanding training allowed all of us to contribute to the mission in realistic scenarios that clearly showed the extent to which the unit has grown during our work-up. The road ahead will focus heavily on gear preparation, and planning, but the most important aspect is the readiness of our families.

We must actively work to ensure that the families are well prepared for the deployment while their Marine or Sailor is away. Accomplishing this before departure will ensure that our Marines and Sailors are fully focused on and committed to mission success.



H&S Marines get a class on using common MRE components to treat wounds. (COINFEX)



LCpl Reed mans a machine gun position during battalion defense. (EMV)



AK-47 assembly and disassembly during enemy weapons training (COINFEX)

**Eric V. Kjono, 1<sup>st</sup> Lieutenant USMC**  
**Commanding Officer, Company H&S**  
**Third Battalion, First Marines**

## Dear Family And Friends

From January 5<sup>th</sup> to February 5<sup>th</sup>, 2010 at MCB Twenty-Nine Palms California Kilo Company participated in Exercise Enhanced Mojave Viper during which training, including but not limited to, counter insurgency operations in urban terrain, route clearance, key leader engagements, combined arms live fire maneuver, and obstacle breaching was conducted. Throughout the month of training Kilo was reinforced with tanks, amphibious assault vehicles, and snipers, as well as specialized Marines such as law enforcement professionals, human intelligence teams, explosive ordnance disposal, and civil affairs. In addition to these reinforcements Kilo work in coordination with adjacent companies, close air support, and artillery fire support.



During the final training exercise Kilo Company occupied a forward operating base from which they conducted a counter-insurgency scenario with hundreds of Afghan role-players. The company worked to support civil affairs, train local police, and take on many other non-kinetic challenges that are presented on a day to day basis in Afghanistan.

This month long Battalion exercise represented the capstone training event to provide the final refinements of Kilo's techniques and procedures before their deployment to Afghanistan.



**Sean Barnes, Captain USMC  
Commanding Officer, Company K  
Third Battalion, First Marines**

## Dear Family And Friends



The sailors and Marines of India Company spent the month of January at the Enhanced Mojave Viper Exercise, a thirty day long pre-deployment exercise at the Marine Air Ground Combat Center, Twentynine Palms, California. During this time, the Raiders conducted six live fire ranges, honed their combined arms capabilities, and trained for counterinsurgency operations in preparation for their deployment to Afghanistan.

I took command of India Company at the beginning of Mojave Viper coming from the Operations Shop. Although I had only been in for a short period of time, I was already extremely impressed by how well the company conducted itself during one of the initial evolutions at live fire range 401. Among those observing the events was the director of the Tactical Training and Exercise Control Group (TTECG), the unit responsible for evaluating and training battalions participating in Mojave Viper, who had mentioned that the company's attack was among the best he had seen during his time in that position. I cannot take credit for their performance, but they excelled due to diligent training beforehand.

Joining India Company during the exercise were numerous attachments, including an explosive ordnance disposal team, a female engagement team, combat engineers, linguists, and dog handlers with their IED-sniffing dogs.



These attachments enhanced the company's capabilities, from allowing Marines to better engage the local population to detecting and neutralizing improvised explosive devices during their training.

The culminating exercise of Mojave Viper was MRX, a multi-day evolution that required the company to clear, hold, and build upon a simulated Afghan village, complete with hundreds to role players portraying locals, officials, police and soldiers, as well as insurgents. While India Company had demonstrated its proficiency in the previous evolutions, MRX required tact and judgment from the Marines in deciding when to use force in the process of conducting counterinsurgency operations as to build relationships with the locals. The Raiders showed that they were equally adept at fighting a conventional fight as well as an unconventional operation. I was very pleased with the tactical patience and judgment my Marines showed during stressful situations. As company commander it is a privilege for me to command this unit in the upcoming deployment.

Semper Fidelis.

**Matthew J. McGirr, Captain USMC  
Commanding Officer, Company I  
Third Battalion, First Marines**

## Dear Family And Friends

Greetings to the families and friends of Lima Company. November through January were hectic and fast paced months for Lima Company. Following the return from Exercise Steel Knight in 29 Palms, California Lima Company immediately set out on an ambitious training schedule to improve on our skills.



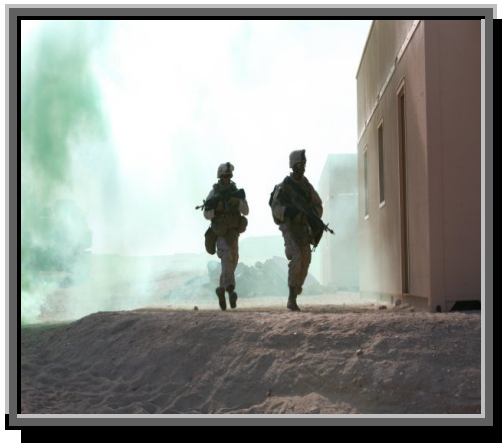
Lima Company conducted a rigorous conventional urban attack exercise in K-2 combat town in mid November. The exhausting three day training event culminated with a force on force attack and defense of the town that lasted through the night.

December's focus was on a battalion Counter-Insurgency exercise. The station training honed Marines skills and challenged their capabilities. Despite an unexpected deluge of rain, Lima Company received excellent training in patrolling, Counter-IED techniques, Tactical Site Exploitation and helicopter borne operations. December ended with well deserved Christmas leave.

January brought the countless challenges of exercise Enhanced Mojave Viper in 29 Palms, California. The hectic month long exercise enabled Marines to conduct challenging training in platoon and company live fire attacks, mechanized attacks, live fire defenses as well as counter-insurgency practical application. Lima Company returned from the exercise a stronger and tougher band of warriors.

We wish to acknowledge the hard work our family readiness assistant is doing by keeping the lines of communication open to all Lima Company families: Thanks to Jenny Kenneley.

Our goal is the successful future deployment forward of all Marines and Sailors of this company, and the return home of all with honor when complete.



**John J. Kenneley, Captain USMC  
Commanding Officer, Company L  
Third Battalion, First Marines**

## Dear Family And Friends



Greetings family and friends. It is my distinct pleasure to announce that Weapons Company has once again elevated the standard and outperformed expectations. January was an eventful month for your Marines. The many challenges of Enhanced Mojave Viper (EMV) in Twenty-Nine Palms were easily overcome due to the hard work and dedication of Weapons Company. As EMV attempted to push the Marines out of their comfort zone, they pushed back, receiving little to no rest. This was especially the case for the Marines of 81mm Mortar Platoon, who supported every Company and Platoon of the Thundering Third during nine live-fire ranges, firing a total of 2,115 rounds.

CAAT and Scout Snipers received little down time as well. CAAT took the lead clearing routes and screening the Battalion's flanks. CAAT received significant trigger time, demonstrating mastery of our relatively new SABER systems, firing a total of 16 TOW missiles with 100% accuracy. Our Scout Snipers proved extremely effective in providing integral reconnaissance and surveillance for Brahma, refining targets, and controlling indirect and aviation fires. At Range 205 our Snipers again raised the bar, scoring an average of 81%, better than the last 18 Battalions to execute EMV.

Last but not least, Headquarters Platoon did their part supporting the Battalion as well.

By completion of EMV, Brahma's Fires planned, executed and

cleared over 1,200 81mm mortar rounds, 500 155mm artillery rounds, and 60 close air support missions. However, when the situation turned from a conventional fight to a non-conventional fight they continued to suppress the enemy through non-kinetic fires – planning information operations for the Battalion.

Finally, I would like to take the opportunity to congratulate some of our many exemplary Marines and welcome a few new members to the Brahma Family. Congratulations must be given to GySgt Holt, SSgt Worley, Sgt Rivera, Sgt Krumrie, Cpl Atchley, Cpl Schnepfer, and Cpl Osborne on their recent promotions, as well as to HN3 Barr, who was awarded a Navy and Marine Corps Achievement Medal for organizing and conducting 20 hours of Combat Life Saver classes that will significantly influence the Company's efficiency and capabilities. I would also like to extend a warm welcome to the wives of Cpl Pecka and LCpl Lucero as well as SSgt Najar's newborn daughter, Sgt Blackwell's newborn daughter, and Sgt Henexson's newborn daughter. We are certainly blessed to have you all as a part of our Family.

As our upcoming deployment quickly approaches, I encourage our families to take advantage of the little time we have left together. I understand fully the challenges this deployment will bring to our families and I thank you for your devotion and dedication to our Marines, as your continued support is vital to the strength of our unit.

**Robert B. Farrell, Major USMC**  
**Commanding Officer, Company W**  
**Third Battalion, First Marines**

### 3rd Battalion 1st Marines

Camp Horno  
Camp Pendleton, CA 92055

PHONE:  
(760)763-0531

FAX:  
(760)763-0551

E-MAIL:  
[1mardiv31bnmailbox@usmc.mil](mailto:1mardiv31bnmailbox@usmc.mil)

FRO:  
(760)763-0536  
(760)468-0468

E-MAIL:  
[PAUL.F.WALTERS@USMC.MIL](mailto:PAUL.F.WALTERS@USMC.MIL)

CHAPLAIN:  
(760)763-0540

E-MAIL:  
[LOUIS.LEE@USMC.MIL](mailto:LOUIS.LEE@USMC.MIL)

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#### We're on the Web!

See us at:

<http://www.i-mef.usmc.mil/div/1mar/3bn/>

For MCCS Main Page:

<http://www.mccscp.com/home/home.aspx>

**UNITED STATES MARINE CORPS**  
3D BATTALION, 1ST MARINES  
1ST MARINE DIVISION, (REIN)  
BOX 555422  
CAMP PENDLETON CALIFORNIA  
92055-5841

### Overcoming Deployment Difficulties Through Support

No one will argue about the difficulties and challenges family members go through during deployment of their Marine/Sailor. All of us need support at one point or another in our life. Nobody is immune. Support is even more imperative for military families especially during deployments. We are constantly being thrown into new and unfamiliar situations and deployments. No matter how much experience we have coping with deployments, we still need all the support we can get.

During a deployment, there are several types of support we need to consider. There is the support we give each other as military family members, the support we give our children, the support we give our Marines/Sailors, and the support we receive from non-military family and friends.

Military family members are in a unique position to understand exactly what other military family members are going through before, during and after a deployment. Now before a deployment, everyone is wrapped up in the cocoon of their own lives. While there are a slew of emotions flying around, family members withdraw into their homes and deal with things as a family, relishing every last moment their Marine/Sailor is home. However, from the moment that bus drives on, family members are, in a sense, on their own. That is why it is so important for family members and/or spouses to band together and support each other. You don't have to be friends with everyone, but having those few close people will make the ordeal infinitely more bearable. Just as we want people around to help us, we should also do everything in our power to be there for others: take their kids from time to time, run to the store and get them medicine if they're sick, etc.

Supporting our children can be much trickier. They experience different things at different ages and can go through several emotional stages during one deployment. To help them, look for age-appropriate books, sit and talk with them, look for support groups for children of deployed parents. The Religious Ministry Team (RMT) will be offering United Through Reading (UTR) during our deployment so that married Marines/Sailors can record and mail book-reading to their children. It is amazing how little thing such as reading books can help our children.

Our deployed Marines/Sailors also need our support. Just as they try to put on a brave front, you also have to maintain sanity at home. I am a firm believer in filling your Marine/Sailor on everything that goes on at home. That's what worked in my marriage. Now, you may not want to talk to your Marine/Sailor frantic, crying and crazy about something that happened. However, through a letter or a mention in a phone call, let them know what is going on, the good, bad and ugly. The key is to remember that all they need from you is to let them know how much you love and miss them and that you can't wait to see them again. As tough as they are, Marines/Sailors need love. Send care packages by USPS and send letters; they're so much more fun and personable than an email. During my last MEU deployment, a gourmet hot sauce I got from my wife made my day. I always tell her, "honey, you sure knows how to spice up my life."

Finally, we all receive support from our non-military family and friends. The important thing to remember about this type of support is that they mean well. Sometimes we just feel like they don't get it, they don't understand, and it can get frustrating. They are trying their best to help and make us feel better, and it makes it easier to take the support when you keep that in mind!

Always remember that in a military lifestyle we need to give support as well as make ourselves accept it when it's offered. It makes everything so much easier to handle! It is my prayer that you will find the needed support in a timely manner. May God bless you and give you strength through this coming deployment.

**Louis Lee, Lieutenant USN**  
**Battalion Chaplain,**  
**Third Battalion, First Marines**