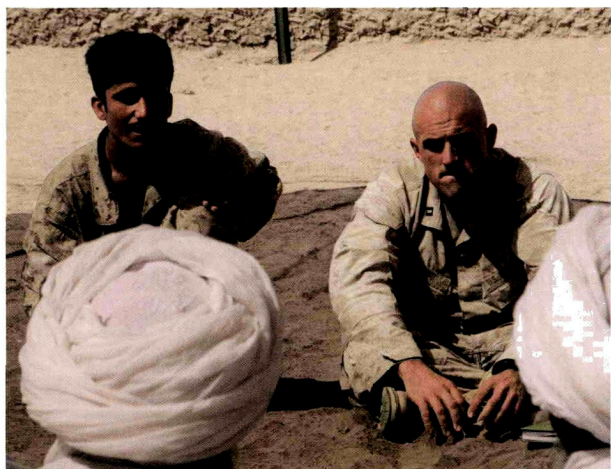


# THE WAR ON TERROR

Edited by R. R. Keene



Capt Scott A. Cuomo, CO, F/2/2, listens to village elders during a *shura* outside of Patrol Base Amir in Garmisr District, Helmand province, during early March. Marines spoke with village elders about agriculture opportunities brought to them via the U.S. Agency for International Development.

## OPERATION ENDURING FREEDOM ■ Helmand Province, Afghanistan Alternative to the Poppy Offered To Southern Afghanistan Farmers

Marines with 2d Battalion, Second Marine Regiment looking to solve "the poppy problem" conducted *shuras*, or consultations, with Garmisr farmers inside Combat Outpost Sharp and Patrol Base Amir, Afghanistan, in early March.

They discussed current and upcoming agricultural programs, which will allow the farmers to move away from growing poppy, a crop used to make opium, which has been the main source of income for many farmers in Garmisr.

"Without the poppy seeds, we need everything—corn, wheat, okra," said one village elder, during the *shura* in COP Sharp. "If we tell the people they can't grow poppy, then they're going to be asking us for different seeds."

Wilmer E. Snell, an agricultural specialist from the U.S. Department of Agriculture, spoke to the elders about these opportunities, the first of which is a program that gives farmers training, seeds and fertilizer at a discounted price.

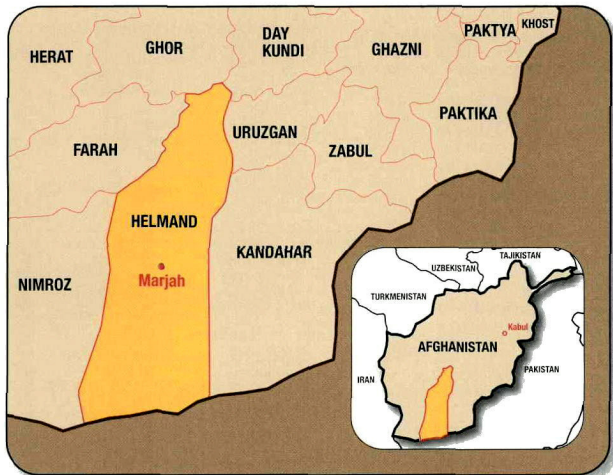
"For many months ... we have been trying to connect you with your government," said Second Lieutenant Conner G. Gentil, Executive Officer, Company F, 2d Bn, 2d Marines. "He [Snell] is here to connect you with your department of agriculture."

Snell added that the program also is being used to provide the farmers with extra income so they do not feel the need to turn to the Taliban for money.

The program—already started in parts of Garmisr—has distributed seeds to approximately 2,500 farmers.

Snell said that now is the time to think about what kinds of seeds the farmers would want to plant next year. He also talked to the elders about cooperatives. A cooperative is made up of at least 35 members, cannot be located any closer than 300 meters from the next cooperative, and will be able to purchase farming equipment, such as tractors, using money from a grant.

"It's a way of pooling your resources





LCPL DWIGHT A. HENDERSON

SSgt Robin J. Reyes (foreground), civil affairs, patrols through villages near Lakari bazaar in Garmsir District, Helmand province. The Marines were on patrol to assess and pay battle damage claims.

for things that are shared," said Snell. "Here in Afghanistan, it's almost an exercise in governance because they're not used to working together and having boards of directors and things like that. It's good for them, it can build their communities."

The areas of Mian Poshteh and Lakari are newly secured areas that just months ago played host to countless firefights between Marines and insurgents.

Marines took time at the *shuras* to remind the elders of the need for peace in the area.

"One thing we have to stress is the reason this stuff is able to happen is because we now have security in the area," said 2dLt Gentil. The farmers, Marines and U.S. officials will meet again to discuss future cooperative opportunities throughout Garmsir.

LCpl Dwight A. Henderson  
Combat Correspondent, RCT-7

## ■ Camp Delaram II Marines Reimburse Afghan Citizens For Battle Damage to Their Homes

Leathernecks with Company F, 2d Battalion, Second Marine Regiment patrolled to different villages surrounding the Lakari bazaar, March 8, to assess and pay battle damage claims.

A few months ago the villages surrounding Lakari bazaar, Garmsir District, Helmand province, Afghanistan, were the scenes of countless firefights.

As the fighting intensified, residents would flee their homes, or be forced out by insurgents who would take possession of the houses and fire at Marine patrols. The Marines would then close with the enemy and search the buildings, which often resulted in battle damage.

The fighting has died down, and families have returned to their homes. Some came home to find their doors kicked in,

or windows broken, prompting them to go to the Marines for help.

"If you don't give them battle damage claims, you better give them something tangible," said Captain Scott A. Cuomo, Commanding Officer, F/2/2. "It's full-spectrum counterinsurgency. The family is caught in the middle of it."

The patrol started with a small village where the residents already had gone through the process of filling out claims cards, photographing the damage and verifying the ownership of their compounds. "We actually go there so the local nationals don't have to come all the way over here," said Staff Sergeant Robin J. Reyes, a civil affairs Marine currently attached to Fox Co. "Also so they see our presence."

The Marines paid for the repairs and apologized for the time it took to be reimbursed. This provided the Afghan civilians and the military the opportunity to





LOFT, SAMUEL A. NASSO

sit down and talk.

"I think one of the objectives of civil affairs is the winning of hearts and minds," said Reyes. "Through [battle damage claims] we develop sources, we develop informants, we develop positive relationships, and we project information."

The Marines then moved to another village next to the bazaar, only this time, the compounds had not been assessed.

The Marines took pictures of the damaged compounds so that Reyes could make an assessment and give the owners a fair price.

"We kind of defeat the [information operations] campaign of the enemy by doing these kinds of things," said Reyes.

While it is sometimes hard to tell if the damage was actually created by Marines, they are generally more than happy to assist the citizens. "A lot of people are only going to go to the group who provides," said Reyes. "Whoever is doing the best for their needs is probably where they're going to go."

Reyes added that people will sometimes try to take advantage of the Marine hospitality, but it's rare.

"It's the nature of the beast," said Reyes. "Some people will say a tank came around and killed 300 of [their] chickens."

Cuomo added that handling battle damage claims is not what the average infantryman joins to do; however, the Marines realize the importance of the mission.

Through this system, the Marines of Fox Co have gained a stronger relationship with the locals.

LCpl Dwight A. Henderson  
Combat Correspondent, RCT-7

**Above:** Elements of 3d Recon Bn make their way toward three VMM-261 MV-22 Ospreys that will insert them into Marjah, Feb. 19, to relieve an infantry battalion engaged in a heavy firefight.

**Below:** Leathernecks of 3d Recon Bn, embarked in an MV-22 Osprey, prepare to enter the fray via airborne assault near Marjah.



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## ■ Marjah

### Ospreys Insert Troops Into Marjah

Three MV-22 Ospreys from Marine Medium Tiltrotor Squadron (VMM) 261, Marine Aircraft Group 40, Marine Expeditionary Brigade-Afghanistan transported a raid force into an area of Marjah in support of Operation Moshtarak, Feb. 19.

This was the first time the Osprey was

used for an insertion since the operation began six days earlier.

"The mission was successful," said Major Stephen Conley, the aircraft commander for one of the Ospreys that participated in the mission. "It was a great use of our assets. We transported a good amount of Marines in a relatively short period of time."



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A number of Marine aircraft with differing but complementary capabilities supported Marines fighting in Marjah. This AV-8B Harrier from Marine Attack Squadron 231 is refueled at Camp Dwyer, not far from the Marjah action, by Marines from Marine Wing Support Squadron 372.



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LCpl Philip Corbin, an ordnance tech for Marine Light Attack Helicopter Squadron 367, signals the aircraft captain from alongside an AH-1W Super Cobra that the ordnance has been checked and the gunship can launch in support of Marines on the ground.



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This UH-1Y "Yankee" helicopter's ordnance has been checked and the all-clear signal given for launch from the Camp Dwyer pad in support of Marines on the ground.

The Osprey has provided increased flexibility to commanders due to its ability to fly farther and faster than a traditional helicopter. Additionally, the Osprey can rotate its rotors to vertically take off and land.

"We shrink the battlespace," said Conley. "We can go deep into the area of operation because of our speed."

When Regimental Combat Team 7, MEB-A needed to provide relief to an infantry battalion that was engaged in a fierce firefight, a request was sent to MAG-40 to begin planning the insertion of Marines from 3d Reconnaissance Battalion, MEB-Afghanistan into Marjah.

This was an immediate request requiring many aviation assets, according to Lieutenant Colonel Thomas Gore, the MAG-40 future operations officer.

As of Feb. 13, MEB-Afghanistan had been using ground forces in conjunction with available aviation assets to clear enemy forces from the city of Marjah and maintain control of those cleared areas.

In addition to the Osprey, the insertion was supported by other MAG-40 assets. The KC-130J Super Hercules from Marine Aerial Refueler Transport Squadron 352 provided battlefield illumination, and Marine Attack Squadron 231 used AV-8B Harriers for overwatch and close air support once the Marines were on the ground. Marine Light Attack Helicopter Squadron 367 employed its AH-1W Super Cobra helicopters to escort the Ospreys.

This was not the first time the Osprey participated in an insertion of ground forces. During Operation Cobra's Anger in December 2009, the Osprey was one of the primary aircraft used to insert military personnel. Since then, the Osprey has provided assault support throughout the area of operations.

As many aviation Marines see it, their mission is to support the Marines on the ground.

"Every day, I have the honor of keeping Marines on the ground safe by providing support from overhead," said Staff Sergeant Nicholas McCulloch, a weapons and tactics instructor for VMM-261. "We work long hours and work real hard toward mission accomplishment and get as many Marines home as we can."

By the end of the mission, Feb. 19, the three Ospreys had inserted two waves of Marines into Marjah. As RCT-7 continues to confront enemy forces, the speed of the Osprey will give commanders more flexibility to resupply the Marines on the ground and reinforce units, providing critical support to the fight.

LCpl Samuel Nasso  
Combat Correspondent, MAG-40

