



UNITED STATES MARINE CORPS

3d Battalion, 1st Marines
Regimental Combat Team-7
1st Marine Division Forward
Unit 40215, FPO AP 96427-0215

21 June 2010

To the Community of Huntington Beach,

From all the Marines and Sailors of 3rd Battalion, 1st Marines here in Garmsir District, Helmand Province, Afghanistan, I wanted to take the opportunity to say thank you for your support of our Battalion through the Huntington Beach 3/1 Foundation. We are honored by your patriotism and unselfishness.

The Thundering Third took over responsibility for our area of operations on 11 May. The hard reality of Afghanistan hit home 44 minutes after the ceremony when God took the lives of our first two Marines. Since then, we have lost six more members of the team and sent home more than a dozen seriously wounded. Despite our casualties, things are progressing well here in Garmsir. Each company has its own area of operations and each area has its own challenges. But in every area, we are making steady forward progress in taking the fight to the enemy and protecting those who cannot fight for themselves. Our Marines and Sailors know now that we are better on every level than the enemy that we face. The insurgent is not some mythical warrior; he is dangerous but he cannot stand up to a squad of Marines and their ANA partners. Occasionally he lands a punch, but ultimately he is nothing more than the neighborhood bully. He tries to rule by fear and intimidation. He is desperate. He is running out of time. He is losing.

Our forces and our Afghan partners, instead, are developing government ministries and services, delivering goods, seeds, school supplies, swing sets, shoes, medical aid and other assistance. We provide them with hope and opportunity. We meet with them continuously and work with them to help build a better future. Across every aspect of society, we are helping where we can to offer the Afghan people the future they desire. Not much of this makes the news because it doesn't include sensationalized commentary like "bleeding ulcer" or "death toll" nor is it associated with any upcoming political campaign.

Every day your Marines and Sailors are engaging the population and hunting the enemy. They live a life of wet feet, caked with moon dust turned to mud. They cross the canals by wading through the water because the bridges are where the insurgents put IEDs. They wear body armor and carry heavy loads in temperatures that are already approaching 120 degrees. They know with every step, they are being watched. But every day and every night, they head out and do their noble work. Their spirit never wanes. Our Marines come from across the United States, from urban areas and farmlands alike. They come from every socio-economic strata of society. Some of them have degrees from world class institutions, and some barely graduated from high school. But nothing they have done before the Marine Corps will have as much of a profound impact on who they are as what they are doing right now. Words are inadequate to capture this completely. Being a Marine comes with its pains and it comes with its sacrifices. But as the wife of one of my Marines so aptly and concisely stated – "it's a good life, it's not easy, but it is good." And I think the highest compliment one Marine can bestow upon another is to simply state "He is a good man." It is simple, it is humble, but to those who have had the privilege to know them, whether as fellow Marines or as fellow family members, friends or neighbors, in the life they have committed themselves to, the term "good" is so amazingly profound it escapes definition.

We are proud of our association with the community of Huntington Beach, and consider you a valued part of our extended family back home. It is organizations such as the Huntington Beach 3/1 Marines Foundation that make us proud to go forward on a daily basis. You are *good* men and women, and I speak for all of our Marines and Sailors in saying that we very much look forward to our eventual return and to a future opportunity to say thank you in person.

Semper Fidelis.

Lieutenant Colonel Ben Watson
Commanding Officer, 3rd Battalion, 1st Marines