

# Stories from Swifty

1 AUGUST 2021

## A MESSAGE FROM THE CO

Purple Fox friends and family: Greetings again from the very sunny and warm Kingdom of Saudi Arabia!

The months of June and July were our busiest yet here in Saudi Arabia. In June, we supported two detachments of aircraft and aircrew for several days to other regional countries while in support of ongoing missions crucial to the Central Command Area of Operations. While doing so, we continued to maintain our alert posture at our home base should we be called upon to respond to any crisis, and we transported tens of thousands of pounds of cargo and hundreds of passengers on Aviation Logistics Support missions. Of course this success would not have been possible without every Marine and Sailor in the squadron working hard every day to keep the squadron functioning and aircraft flying.

The Purple Fox maintenance Marines work in extreme heat every day to keep our planes safe to fly, with average temperatures in the day soaring over the 115 degree mark and at night dropping just below 95 degrees. Our aircrew continue to fly demanding flight hours, supporting 24-hour operations while continuing to advance in their qualifications. Not in the least, our headquarters' Marines and Sailors keep the squadron running by doing the day-to-day tasks required to function like a well-oiled machine. To top it off, the nature of our expeditionary environment has made even simple tasks more challenging, but every Purple Fox has risen to the occasion to ensure for the success of the squadron!

The squadron pushed through the deployment halfway mark as June turned to July. July proved to be just as busy as June as the tempo of operations did not slow down. We kicked off July with a much-needed day off for the whole squadron to enjoy, followed by an Independence Day "Burger Burn." Everyone missed the fireworks shows and backyard BBQs of San Diego, but it was nice to enjoy a meal outside the chow hall, and SgtMaj Woodby is unstoppable behind a grill!

On top of all the operational demands of their day-to-day jobs, Marines capitalized on opportunities to continue their personal and professional development through Professional Military Education. To date, we completed two highly successful month-long Corporal Courses, two Lance Corporal Seminars, and dozens of Marines advanced in their martial arts training through the Marine Corps Martial Arts Program to include six Marines who graduated from the rigorous Martial Arts Instructor's course.

As we move into August, we find the Purple Foxes continuing to maintain our readiness for our primary mission of crisis response and aviation logistics support, but we will also start turning our focus towards the redeployment of the squadron and the stand down of the Special Purpose Marine Aviation Ground Task Force-Crisis Response, a command that has been deployed to the Middle East since 2014.

As you all are probably aware, this has been a highly dynamic deployment for the Purple Foxes with lots of "firsts," uncertainties, and change. Because of this and the deteriorating situation in Afghanistan, there is still some ambiguity surrounding the end of our mission and our ultimate return. Without compromising operational security, what I can say right now is we are on track to return sometime in the fall with advanced party personnel approximately one month ahead of main body personnel. Additionally, because of the amount of equipment that is being retrograded, we can expect that a small contingent of Marines will redeploy at a later date as they are required to remain behind to assist with final cleaning, pack up, and loading of gear for the transit to home station.

I can assure you that once we have clarity regarding end of mission and with firm dates for return windows, we will communicate with you through our Family Readiness Team at the earliest time possible to allow you to make plans should you want to be present to greet your Marine or Sailor upon their return. Additionally, our Family Readiness Team will have more information about what to expect about your Purple Foxes' return at our Family Readiness redeployment brief, which will be sent out in a virtual format via email. Again, I am truly humbled and very proud of each and every Purple Fox in their continued hard work in the face of uncertainty. I thank you for the support you provide to your Marine or Sailor and we are looking forward to returning home and spending some well-earned time with family and friends!

Please don't hesitate to reach out to our Deployment Readiness Coordinators, Sabrina Parker, [sabrina.parker@usmc.mil](mailto:sabrina.parker@usmc.mil) and Kellie Cannon, [kellie.cannon@usmc.mil](mailto:kellie.cannon@usmc.mil), or our Uniformed Readiness Coordinator, Capt Daly Montgomery, at [daly.montgomery@usmc.mil](mailto:daly.montgomery@usmc.mil), with any questions or concerns.

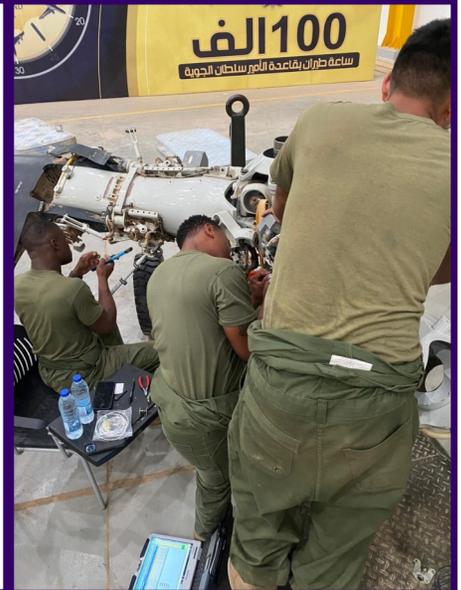
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## Avionics



**Avionics** has been working hard on the flight line day and night helping to keep the aircraft groomed and ready. With temperatures consistently reaching above 115 degrees during the day, they continue maintaining a good attitude and have done a great job fixing aircraft and taking care of each other to keep their morale up. Just about everyone has been hitting the gym, especially Sergeant Elizondo. Not sure if he's wearing smaller shirts but his biceps are looking swell! Everyone is looking forward to being able to spend time with their families and eat their favorite meals when they get home. For those of age, we are also looking forward to enjoying a couple cold brews. See ya soon America!



## Airframes

The Airframes Division has had a very successful deployment both supporting combat operations and in professional development. We have capitalized on several opportunities to conduct the Marine Corps Martial Arts Program resulting in Corporal Wright becoming a green belt, with tan tab Martial Arts Instructor. Lance Corporals Bratton, and Lawlor earned their green belts, while Private First Class Thompson and Lance Corporal Miller earned their gray belts. Airframes has also seen huge success in Professional Military Education having graduated Corporals O'Neal, Bergstresser, Glidden, Gomez, Hernandez, and Nachieh from Corporals Course and Lance Corporals Miller, Bratton, Carter, Arroyo, and Lawlor from Lance Corporals Seminar. These courses help to strengthen and develop our Marines into both lethal and effective leaders and set them up for eligibility for future promotions. A big Purple Fox congratulations to the Gliddens for welcoming a new baby girl during this deployment. To all the spouses, family, and friends we all love and miss you and look forward to seeing you all soon.

Give a Shit,

The World's Finest Airframes Division



## Quality Assurance

QA loves working with program managers and monitors within the maintenance department. We are screening downloads for discrepancies, while insuring safe and quality maintenance. On occasion we get the opportunity to get our hands dirty assisting other shops. Fix 'em and fly 'em. We won't leave our OIC behind. That's the QA way.

## FLIGHT LINE

This month the Flightline shop has had the opportunity to train Cpls Eubank, Caparell and Weber to be future LATIs (Low Altitude Tactics Instructors). Multiple maintenance qualifications have also been completed with Sgt Dietz, Sgt Ramos and Cpl Caparell becoming our newest Collateral Duty Inspectors. Looking to the future here is what one Marine had to say. Cpl Berwick says “I’m looking forward to becoming a BICC (Basic Instructor Crew Chief), LATI and getting home to see some friends and family.”



## ORDNANCE

**Ordnance** has been working hard throughout the deployment to ensure the operability of the countermeasure systems and crew-served weapons. The Marines spend their days maintaining accountability of all their munitions and conducting function checks of each weapon system before the aircrew take the aircraft for a flight. Sergeant Landro was promoted from Corporal in July. Lance Corporal’s Barcelos Dos Santos and Ochoa are working diligently to soak up as much information as possible during their first deployment. Both Marines are working hard to support the daily ordnance tasking while simultaneously working on completing their Ordnance Qualifications. Sergeant Askew is looking forward to returning home to his wife and dogs while Sergeant Landro is eager to see his wife and welcome their daughter into the world in October. All are ready to come home to their family and friends.



## MAINTNANCE ADMINISTRATION

Here are the AMDS Marines from left to right: GySgt Epps, LCpl Jenkins, Cpl Mendez, (IN BACK) Sgt Filgueiras, Cpl Garcia, LCpl Wiggins, Cpl Gilbert. Each Marine in this work center brings a unique and outgoing personality, those are just some of the factors that bring success to VMM-364. Each Marine is eagerly awaiting their return home in order to be with their family and loved ones. While serving abroad these Marines have made numerous accomplishments not only bettering themselves but those around them.

## Flight Equipment

For the month of July Flight Equipment has been busy both off and on duty. The shop facilitated ordering and distributing hundreds of pieces of flight equipment so our flyers can safely and comfortably operate the aircraft, and continued to see



great professional development. LCpl Yancey completed his CDI syllabus, earned his green belt, and is currently working on his Team Leader billet (ordnance qualification). LCpl Radle also completed his CDI syllabus, earned his gray belt, and is currently working on his Team Leader billet too. LCpl Bachman earned his green belt. SSgt Cuevas trained 13 green belts and two gray belts as a Marine Corps Mixed Martial Arts (MCMAP) instructor. After the deployment is over Sgt Short is ecstatic to return to his wife and home in Texas and test drive their recently purchased SUV. Cpl Riesterer had the opportunity to witness the birth of his first child, Jocelyn, and is looking forward to continue his family life with his wife Kyra. LCpl Yancey tells tales of engine swapping his car, selling it, and purchasing his dream work truck on post deployment. LCpl Bachman tediously scours the web in order to make his first vehicle purchase, attend the BRC, and buy a motorcycle as well. Cpl Cambier looks forward to attending drag strips with his Ford Mustang.

## Maintenance Control

The Marines of Maintenance and Material Control continue to effectively manage 12 aircraft and 9 different work centers. At times this billet can be challenging due to the dynamic nature of this deployment but they are getting it done with their high morale, motivation, and GIVE A SHIT mentality. So far on this deployment the Marines of Maintenance Control coordinated five different phase inspections, spearheaded the transition from Al Jaber Air Base (AJAB) to Prince Sultan Air Base (PSAB), 4 depot level repairs, and continue to maintain a high state of aircraft readiness. Gunnery Sergeant Otto was promoted in April. Sgt Foster joined the work center in July. Cpl Contreras graduated Corporal's leadership course. Both Cpl Contreras and SSgt Orth received a green belts and continue to receive martial arts training from Gunnery Sergeant select Lee.



## Tool Room

The Marines of tool room continue to maintain a high state of excellence despite the challenges of moving 912 different IMRL gear and all of the squadron's tools and specialized testing equipment from Al Jaber to Saudi Arabia. Cpl Pineda completed Corporal's leadership course and LCpl Adoptante completed Lance Corporal Seminar. MCMAP training is ongoing and so far LCpls Baltodano, LCpl Derrick, and Cpl Pineda have received their green belt and LCpl Adoptante has received his Gray belt. SSgt Lyme is motivated as ever and has spearheaded the squadron's corporal's leadership course and has done an excellent job at training the squadron's young leaders.





### AVIATION SUPPLY (MALS)

During the month of July, the MALS Detachment has supported both VMM-364 and VMGR-352 with multiple maintenance actions. The Marines have also begun prepping for the retrograde back to CONUS. A total of 6 Marines have completed Corporals Course, 10 Marines have participated in the ongoing MCMAP course and obtained the next higher belt. The Marines remain in high spirits and look forward to seeing their families once they return.

### ADMIN

The S-1 has been hard at work during the month of July.

We have made sure that all of the Purple Foxes are accounted for and receiving the correct pay, on top of continuing to better ourselves as Marines. Sgt Raymond continues to train the squadron, running a Marine Corps Martial Arts Course and helping with Lance Corporal's Seminar, of which LCpl McDougald was a graduate. Cpl Basurto and Cpl Avitia completed the Martial Arts Instructor course with flying colors and



are ready to ensure that the squadron remains physically tough and ready to fight. We have started to lean forward on planning for redeployment and can't wait to be back in sunny San Diego soon. Give A Shit!

### INTELLIGENCE

The S-2 shop has been doing well here in Saudi Arabia. Many of the vehicles here have manual transmissions which have allowed some members of the shop to learn a new skill and other members to refresh an old one. Members of the shop also spend their time studying current events and disseminating information as necessary. The shop will continue to stay engaged throughout the remainder of the deployment and looks forward to returning home



## OPERATIONS

Maj Grant, with the help of his Assistant Ops0, Capt MacDonald, have been tirelessly leading the S-3 tirelessly to keep up with the dynamic nature of the deployment. Capt Losapio, and the Flight Officers have been coordinating all upcoming major muscle movements for the near future. Capt Liu and the rest of the COPS department continue to manage the chaos and draft effective schedules. Finally, Staff Sergeant Case and his Marines, Corporals Echevarria and Hendrix and Lance Corporals Woodberry and Cruz, have been maintaining aircrew



logbooks, tracking the squadron's flight hours and operational support, and even assisting the daily writers with their everyday tasks.

All that being said, Operations continues to work hard so that we can finish the deployment strong and get back home to their friends and families safely. Give a shit!"

## LOGISTICS AND SUPPLY

The squadron S-4 team has completed a multitude of logistical challenges that have presented themselves throughout this deployment. First was the transition from Al Jaber in Kuwait to the Kingdom of Saudi Arabia. This required several movements of supplies, personnel, and equipment utilizing both air and ground assets in order to set the foundation for squadron operations. Currently, the squadron S-4 is preparing for Retrograde, Redeployment, Redistribution, and Disposal (R3D) operations for the squadron's return to Camp Pendleton.



## COMMUNICATIONS

It has been a good month for the S-6 shop. Cpl Allott graduated from Corporal's Course on July 22, with the highest GPA in his class. Everyone in the shop is excited about coming home soon. Sgt Keuling is especially excited about being able to drive her car again. Cpl Allot is excited about being able to go out to eat with the boys on the weekends. And 1stLt Rocha is excited to be able to eat a California Burrito on the beach.

### MEDICAL

VMM364 Medical has been busy keeping our Marines healthy and hydrated in the Saudi Heat. Our sailors have been working hard in conjunction with our MWSD counterparts to get

Marines Vaccinated throughout the months of June and July, and integrate with all different Combat Elements in the SPMAGTF. A big shoutout to HN Caskey, who was selected as Blue Jacket of the Quarter, and HM1 Ireland was selected as SPMAGTF's Sailor of the Quarter! We have learned a lot on deployment, but everyone is looking forward to getting home to the cooler California weather, and spending time with family and friends this fall.



### SAFETY AND STANDARDIZATION

Greetings from the Safety and Standardization Department! Your Marines have put in exemplary work during this deployment despite numerous challenges. A big shout out

to Sgt McBride from the Flightline division for earning Safety Pro of the Quarter for his actions while working in the "Fox Den". The coveted Safety Pro parking spot will be his upon our return.

G.A.S!



### JULY CORPORAL'S LEADERSHIP COURSE

# A Message from our Deployment Readiness Coordinator

Dear Purple Fox Families-

I hope you all have had a fun-filled and relaxing summer. Fall is just around the corner and that means the return of the Foxes is at the forefront of everyone's mind. We are excited to start planning for their return. First, I want to make sure that everyone knows that this deployment for VMM-364 is not a "normal rotation" type deployment for the squadron as the Special Purpose MAGTF that the Foxes are attached to is being closed out. What does this mean? This means that there will not be another squadron deploying to replace the Purple Foxes. VMM-364 will have to redeploy all their aircraft and equipment to Camp Pendleton which will be a huge undertaking. Additionally, there is much uncertainty in the Middle East and Afghanistan right now. For these reasons, the commander of military forces in the region has put a hold on the exact dates when the Foxes will re-deploy. As the higher level headquarters work out the details, we will patiently wait to hear when VMM-364 will return to Camp Pendleton. We will discuss this at the upcoming Family Readiness Meeting, and we will be happy to answer any questions about this as well. We will hold the next Family Readiness Meeting via Zoom, so that we can have everyone, not just local families attend. At this meeting, we will be planning for the homecoming and how we are going to support our Single Marines returning to the barracks. This support comes from our Purple Fox families, both near and far.

Currently, we do not have return windows to pass to families, but as soon as we do, we will be contacting the families so they are ready for their service member's return. Once we pass return information to families, I would like to remind you to abide by Operational Security, otherwise known as OPSEC. Return dates, locations, and times are sensitive information that you will be privy to, so please make sure that you don't share that with any one that doesn't have a "need-to-know". Another reminder, please do not share the information on Social Media, or talk about it in public areas. This protects your service member and you from those who would want to see harm done, or seek to take advantage of a service members absence. If you aren't sure what can or can't be discussed or shared, please feel free to contact me.

Let's talk about Return and Reunion. Since so many of our families have returned home for the deployment, we will be holding the Return and Reunion Brief virtually, via Adobe Connect hosted by MCCS Readiness and Deployment Support Trainers. The Brief is open to all Purple Fox authorized contacts and we would love to have you join us on the virtual brief. However if you are unable to join us virtually don't worry, because the brief will be recorded and sent out via email.

Lastly we want to remind you that when we pass deployment return information, dates and times are always subject to change. This is normal and the nature of deployments. Many factors are at play that can affect the details of the return, from operational date shifts to mechanical issues with the return carrier. As we have said many times before when it comes to deployments, 'Semper Gumby', Always Flexible!

We do have some events coming up that we hope give you a chance to come together and support one another. Everyone is welcome and RSVPs are appreciated but not required.

## **Friday, 13 Aug, 3PM, Virtual Volunteer Meeting on Zoom**

Topic: Purple Fox Family Readiness Meeting

Time: Aug 13, 2021 03:00 PM Pacific Time (US and Canada)

Link: [https://us02web.zoom.us/j/89107094440?](https://us02web.zoom.us/j/89107094440?pwd=TWtNMlVhOEpGRmFpbE1mM3MydXZBZz09)

[pwd=TWtNMlVhOEpGRmFpbE1mM3MydXZBZz09](https://us02web.zoom.us/j/89107094440?pwd=TWtNMlVhOEpGRmFpbE1mM3MydXZBZz09)

Zoom Meeting ID: 891 0709 4440

Passcode: 599055

## **Thursday, 2 Sep, 6PM Coffee meet-up with your DRC at Starbucks in Pacific View Event Center.**

We look forward to seeing you soon. Please don't hesitate to reach out to me with any questions 760-685-2338 or [sabrina.parker@usmc.mil](mailto:sabrina.parker@usmc.mil).

Best,

Sabrina Parker

Deployment Readiness Coordinator, VMM-364

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Foxes

*Give A Shit!*

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