

20 November, 2008

Deadwalkers,

I write this letter from my desk here in Camp Lejeune. The men are on post-deployment leave, and it is quiet around the CP. In fact, I think I am the only one here. We returned from Iraq in total on 16Oct08. We made it back in just four waves, and spent two weeks getting adjusted back to life in the states before setting the men free on leave. It has been a busy month, and in just two days we will get our first “dump” of new Marines from the School of Infantry, East. We receive 120 new infantry men and will welcome them to the world’s finest infantry battalion.

Another major event upon our return has been our battalion memorial service for our two fallen warriors. LCpl Haerter and SSgt Dupre were honored on 21Oct08 at Camp Lejeune with a wonderful waterside service that included a number of 1/9 Alumni in attendance. LCpl Haerter’s parents and grand parents were in attendance as was SSgt Dupre’s wife and son. The battalion colors and a 40-man contingent have also traveled to Sag Harbor, NY for a bridge dedication to LCpl Haerter. The community was fantastic and represents the absolute best in patriotism and fidelity. On a rainy and windy day, SgtMaj Corbin and I watched the battalion colors march up the bridge followed by a formation of the Walking Dead who paid tribute to a fallen hero. LCpl Haerter has been approved for the Navy Cross with extraordinary heroism for his actions on 22Apr. I will keep you posted as the specifics of the awarding of the medal gets worked out by HQMC. We do not know at this time where/when that will occur.

We are in the midst of much turnover as officers and SNCOs complete their tours and move on and up. We will turnover about half of the battalion as they start to get ready for the new training cycle and deployment. Personally, I remain with the battalion until the 8th of January, 2008. I will relinquish command to LtCol Robert “Bubba” Salasko on that day at 1400. It has been my life’s honor to be a part of your battalion. I will soon join your ranks as those that have gone before, and look forward to sitting with you as the battalion moves onward in our nation’s endeavors. I have received hundreds of communiqués from former members of the Walking Dead, and have found great strength in the camaraderie and support you have shown us young’uns.

I look forward to meeting many of you again (or for the first time) at our Birthday Ball on 06Dec08. This will be my last major event with the battalion, and our guest of honor is Major General Smith (e-tool). The men will have two weeks of leave during the December holidays and we will then get right back to training. We are currently slated to deploy again in Nov09 on a Marine Expeditionary Unit (Special Operations Capable) ship deployment. The work-up will officially start in April09, so the early part of the year will be dedicated to getting our men to formal schools and individual skills.

Our deployment to Iraq was marked by a number of “firsts”. We were the first battalion to have a “mega-AO”. We owned what was formally run by a brigade headquarters with 6 battalions. We were the first to run operations after transfer of “Provincial Iraqi Control”. We gave much control back over to the Iraqi government, and that meant that we had to work by and with the Iraqi Police. Although difficult to give up any control in a combat environment, the flexibility, ingenuity and dedication of the junior Marines was inspiring. We built municipal buildings, restored sewer and water systems, hosted summer athletic tournaments, provided security to medical conferences... the men did many and varied things... all while working against a determined enemy that built and used 4 suicide truck bombs, 5 suicide vest attacks, and more than 16 IED strikes. I know you have been following us, and we felt you were with us. I proudly believe that the Marines of the Walking Dead have taken another full 30in step forward along the path that you have previously forged.

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Always Faithful,

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