



**COMMANDING OFFICER  
3D RECONNAISSANCE BATTALION  
MESSAGE TO OUR VETERANS**

Men, On 6 July 2012 I assumed command of 3d Reconnaissance Battalion. Taking command of this battalion and being associated with men like you is the greatest honor of my life. As the Commanding Officer, and on behalf of all the men currently serving in the Battalion, I want to say, first and foremost, thank you for your willingness to serve our Nation. Whether you served during Vietnam, Operation Iraqi Freedom, Operation Enduring Freedom, or at any other time throughout the unit's glorious history, you are the greatest individuals this country has ever produced. Your willingness to sacrifice everything for this grand experiment we call America sets you apart from 99 percent of our countrymen. Being a Marine is not an easy undertaking. Marines and their families endure significant hardships that most Americans will never comprehend or appreciate.

As this year's 237th Marine Corps Ball approaches, I want to update you on the state of 3d Recon Battalion. This past December (2011), the Battalion returned from Operation Enduring Freedom, where it conducted combat operations against a determined enemy in the town of Sangin, Helmand Province, Afghanistan. Sangin has been described as the Fallujah of Afghanistan. Some of the toughest fighting of OEF occurred in Sangin, and the Battalion performed magnificently. Lately I have been conducting award ceremonies for some of the heroes of that deployment. You would be proud to meet these men as they indeed live up to the standard set by 3d Recon legends of Vietnam such as Lt. Frank Reasoner and PFC James Honeycutt. On 31 August, Sergeant Adam Richwine was awarded a Navy and Marine Corps Achievement Medal with Combat Distinguishing Device "V" for repeatedly exposing himself to enemy fire during multiple engagements with the enemy. I want to assure you that America continues to produce intrepid patriots like yourselves. Sergeant Richwine is one of many. I have enclosed several recent awards with this letter to demonstrate the quality of Marines that continue to volunteer for reconnaissance duty and serve with 3d Recon.

Unfortunately, not all of the news is good. Marine Corps Recon, and especially 3d Recon Battalion, is hurting for personnel. The advent of Marine Forces Special Operations Command (MARSOC), while good for the Marine Corps and for the Nation, hurt the reconnaissance community. We are now competing with MARSOC for the Marines that are the toughest, smartest, and strongest in the water. It takes a special man to complete reconnaissance training, and many of the few qualified Marines are opting to go to special ops for the pay and status of being in Special Operations Forces (SOF). Recon performs the same type of mission, goes to the same schools, and fights in the same areas as SOF, but we operate with less money, recruiting, and attention. Right now we are in a rebuilding stage as we recruit and train the next generation of Recon Marines. Things are certainly improving for 3d Recon as the Country's strategic focus shifts from the Mideast to Asia and the Pacific. If you have sons, nephews, or grandsons who are considering becoming a Marine, encourage them to go Recon. I have also enclosed the Basic Reconnaissance Course preparation card so that you can get a sense for the basic training of a Marine 0321 Recon Man.

365 days of the year 3d Reconnaissance Battalion has two platoons deployed with the 31st Marine Expeditionary Unit. The Marines not deployed with the MEU are training out of Camp Schwab. In August, a detachment consisting of a Force Recon Platoon and an Amphibious Recon Platoon jump team deployed to Alaska for two weeks and completed 400 jumps. The culminating event was a 23,500' AGL (25,000' MSL) night, combat equipment, on oxygen jump. While this insertion training is impressive and among our Mission Essential Tasks, our bread and butter will always be amphibious and ground reconnaissance patrolling and reporting. This is what the Marine Air Ground Task Force commanders want from their recon assets. As you have done before, we will continue to deliver.

If at any time you would like to contact me, email me at [eric.thompson0302@gmail.com](mailto:eric.thompson0302@gmail.com). Thank you again for your service, and Semper Fi.

E.N. THOMPSON