



MARINE CORPS UNIVERSITY
THE BRUTE KRULAK CENTER
MIDDLE EAST STUDIES
2040 BROADWAY STREET
QUANTICO, VIRGINIA 22134-5067



What: Middle East Studies Afghanistan Symposium: “Evolving Security Challenges in Afghanistan”

When: 11 September 2019, 1300-1600

Where: Warner Center, Marine Corps University, MCB Quantico, VA

Who: Middle East Studies at the Marine Corps University Brute Krulak Center with support of the Marine Corps University Foundation (MCUF) panel of distinguished speakers:

- LtGen Lawrence D. Nicholson (USMC ret), Commander 2d Marine Expeditionary Brigade, Afghanistan May 2009-April 2010;
- LtGen John A. Toolan (USMC, ret.), Commander II MEF (Fwd), Afghanistan March 2011-March 2012;
- MajGen Julian D. Alford, Commander TF-SW Rotation 3, Afghanistan 2018-2019;
- BGen Benjamin T. Watson, Commander TF-SW Rotation 2, Afghanistan 2017-2018;
- Dr. Amin Tarzi, Director of Middle East Studies, Brute Krulak Center, Marine Corps University

Why: The Middle East Studies (MES), as part of the Brute Krulak Center’s mission to enable an interdisciplinary approach to complex problem solving, and in support of MCWAR’s Diplomacy and Statecraft instructional block curriculum, will host a half-day symposium on 11 September 2019 onboard Marine Corps University to examine the evolution of the Marine Corps’ mission in Afghanistan and lessons learned from the nearly twenty-years of combat, counterinsurgency, counterterrorism, and stability operations as well as advisory and capacity building missions in Afghanistan to help inform the next generation of Marine Corps problem framers and solution seekers.

In late November 2001, Naval expeditionary Task Force 58 (TF-58) commanded by then-Brigadier General James N. Mattis seized what became Forward Operating Base Rhino, Afghanistan, located in the Registan Desert, southwest of Kandahar. Camp Rhino was Operation Enduring Freedom’s first strategic foothold in Afghanistan and made the ground war in Afghanistan possible, cutting off fleeing al-Qaeda and Taliban elements and aiding in the seizure of Kandahar. Fast forward to October 2014, the re-deployment of 1st Battalion, 2nd Marines concluded the Marine Corps’ combat role in Afghanistan, reducing its footprint and changing its mission. However, in the spring of 2017, the Marine Corps’ footprint grew when more than 300 Marines assigned to Task Force Southwest (TF-SW) replaced the U.S. Army’s Task Force Forge in Helmand Province for operations under Operation Freedom’s Sentinel as part of the NATO-led Resolute Support Mission. Marines’ assigned to TF-SW continue to provide security force assistance through train, advise, and assist missions to enable a credible and increasingly sustainable Afghan National Defense and Security Forces, capable of preventing terrorist safe havens in southwestern Afghanistan. Although the mission has evolved over time, the Marine Corps continues to be engaged in Afghanistan. And MCU, through the Krulak Center’s MES, continues to provide support to TF-SW Marines through the provision of pre-deployment PME.

The MES symposium is designed to examine the Marine Corps’ changing mission in Afghanistan and U.S. strategies to confront the challenges presented by the continued threat posed by violent extremist organizations, terrorist organizations, and a host of revisionist actors seeking to undercut the policies and interests of the U.S. and its allies within an evolving regional and international environment. The symposium would bring together one or more of the TF-SW commanding generals, Marine Corps senior officers from the pre-2014 period, and experts on political and military affairs to discuss Afghanistan, its future, and the roles of Russia, China, India and the neighboring countries in shaping that future.

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