

Thank you Marine Carl Ferris from L/Cpl Christopher Adlesperger MCL Det.1316 of Rio Rancho, NM for sharing this story.

**Subject:** MCEA-War Dog

Great story of man's best friend and in this special case, the friend and protector of hundreds of Marines in combat.

Thanks to Floyd Wulfeck for sharing the below story with us.



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Afghan Dog Fights Like a Marine

Marine Corps News by Cpl. Jeff Drew



FORWARD OPERATING BASE PAYNE, Helmand province, Afghanistan -- He defends Marines and sailors with love and tenacity, protecting them as any Marine would protect a brother-in-arms. He is the epitome of man's best friend, shielding service members from the enemy while providing companionship and camaraderie. His name is Willy Pete, and he's a warrior, a protector, a friend. He's also a dog.

Company D, 2nd Light Armored Reconnaissance Battalion, 2nd Marine Division (Forward), arrived in the Khan Neshin District in the summer of 2009 for a seven-month deployment and established a coalition presence in the Southwest part of Afghanistan. The LAR Marines pushed west to gain a firm position in a town called Qal'ah-ye Now, where they found two dogs in a compound they began using as a patrol base.

The dogs were beaten and malnourished. One of them was pregnant and the Marines named her Sandy; the other dog was small and frail, and the Marines fittingly named him Scraggles. The company adopted the two dogs, who accepted the Marines as family. Sandy soon had her litter of puppies, one of which would be named Willy Pete. All the puppies went to local residents to protect their farms and herd livestock, but Willy had a different opportunity – he went to the Marines of Company D for companionship.

Scraggles and Sandy grew fond of the Marines in Qal'ah-ye Now and began to protect the patrol base, keeping unwanted dogs and suspicious people away. Willy began to demonstrate the same protective traits of his mother as he grew. He also learned how to patrol with the Marines, what a patrol formation was, and how to react when they came in contact with the enemy. Willy has gone through three complete combat rotations since then as each LAR unit has taken charge of the area in the past two years.

The veteran dog usually takes the lead when the Marines go on patrol now. He stays in front until the Marines pass through the bazaar outside the combat outpost. Local residents often look up in recognition of the dog, who seems to fancy himself a Marine. Willy relocates to a new position once he establishes a clear path for the Marines and begins moving from one side of the patrol to the other, warning Marines of anyone's approach with a quick bark or a low growl.

The many stray dogs in the area tend to be very aggressive and travel in packs. Marines routinely spot Willy scrapping with a pack of wild dogs that approach his Marines.

"I had my squad on a local security patrol in Kala Shureh – we refer to the town as 'Dog Town' because of the large amount of wild dogs in the area," said Sgt. Joshua Davis, an Auburn, Maine, native and squad leader with Weapons Platoon, 2nd LAR. "All of the dogs were overly aggressive and tried to stop the patrol's movement by intimidating the Marines. Willy Pete single handedly fought off five wild dogs to protect them. After Willy engaged the dogs, my squad was able to push through the village to complete our patrol."

Willy also remains an integral part of security when the Marines and sailors return to the patrol base. He tours the grounds with the sergeant of the guard, chasing stray dogs out of friendly lines and warning the watch-standers if anyone approaches the outpost.

The Marines said they appreciate Willy's dedication, as he provides them companionship and demonstrates his loyalty each day by returning to the fight.

"Willy never walks in the other direction or tries to hide when he sees a squad heading out for a patrol," said Lance Cpl. Philip Bulford, an Alabaster, Ala., native and mortar gunner with the company. "I believe that Willy believes it's his duty and an honor to protect us from what may lie ahead."

Willy bears the scars from the explosion of an improvised explosive device and a gunshot wound from an enemy insurgent due to his relentless enthusiasm and unyielding vigor to protect the Marines. Still, his loyalty to the Marines is unrelenting.

"He is a proven veteran and a wounded warrior," said Staff Sgt. Anthony J. Eichler, a Pittsburgh native and the platoon sergeant for Weapons Platoon. "Willy is always tirelessly watching over what I would assume he considers 'his' Marines. He is a friend of all Marines, and he works hard every day on patrol and for the security of (the outpost). He's been knocked down a few times, but continues on with the mission just like any Marine would be expected to do."

Editor's note: 2nd Light Armored Reconnaissance Battalion is currently assigned to 2nd Marine Division (Forward), which heads Task Force Leatherneck. The task force serves as the ground combat element of Regional Command (Southwest) and works in partnership with the Afghan National Security Force and the Government of the Islamic Republic of Afghanistan to conduct counterinsurgency operations. The unit is dedicated to securing the Afghan people, defeating insurgent forces, and enabling ANSF assumption of security responsibilities within its area of operations in order to support the expansion of stability, development and legitimate governance.

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