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### **Growing Through Trials**

Major Alex Lim has been a Public Affairs Officer for the Marine Corps for over ten years. He has served in various countries and regions around the world from cross training in the Philippines to cross training in Thailand with the Thai military forces. He is currently stationed in Myanmar, California, with the Third Marine Aircraft Wing.



Change of command ceremony June 28, 2019

On March 26, 2021, Major Lim agreed to take some time out of his work schedule to sit down with me and have an interview through Zoom. Major Lim has been stationed in various

locations and deployed to Helmand Province, Afghanistan, with Regimental Combat Team One. Like many Marine Corps officers, his journey started in Quantico, Virginia, after graduating from the Virginia Military Institute.



Major Lim in Helmand Province, Afghanistan in 2008

Major Lim told me about his experiences in Afghanistan with RCT1 (Regimental Combat Team One) and about how much of an eye-opening experience it was after spending a year of deployment there. He explained, “You don’t see, as an American, what our form of government, our way of life, and the value in it are until you step out of the United States and you see how other people live and the lack of freedom they have.” He went on to explain that, after recounting these memories, he feels even more appreciative to be an American because of the lack of freedoms he saw on deployment, where insurgents ruled over the people through fear.

Major Lim talked about his interactions as a public affairs officer with the local population and with his junior enlisted Marines throughout the deployment. He explained that the goals of the interactions with the local Afghani forces and his junior enlisted were to build a strong partnership with the local populace and to help and



improve performance capacity to complete a mission. Developing the partnership was key to both.

I asked Major Lim if there were any perks to being multicultural in the Marine Corps and, if so, how that benefitted him. He went on to tell me that when one typically thinks about a Marine, about the average Marine, an Asian Marine does not come to mind, and that we as Asian-Americans are under-representing the United States. He explained that this minority status did benefit him during his deployment in places like Afghanistan: “Afghan people don’t look like the average blond- or brown-haired and blue-eyed Caucasian male.” In fact, he noted, many of the Afghans look a lot like East Asians. He then went on to tell me that the locals saw his name tape and told him that his name is actually a sacred word in the language of Pashtun. According to the locals, the name “Lim” means to connect or to connect people. So, with this knowledge, he was able to have a deeper connection with some of the local Afghani people.

I went on to ask him how it felt to come back home, stateside, after a year-long deployment. He tells me that as he was on deployment, it felt as though he was in a time capsule after stepping back onto American soil on September 11, 2011. He goes on to say that so much has changed; he understood that the world moved on and that he was happy it did because he didn't want anyone to be waiting on him. He explains that it was a little strange at first when he came back to his family and siblings due to the fact that one of his younger brothers had also come back from deployment, and I, as his youngest brother, was just starting high school. Although so much time had passed, he quickly adjusted to the changes.



When asked what advice he would give to younger soldiers or Marines who were about to go on deployment, he said, “don't take any of the moments here prior to deployment for granted.” Major Lim followed up by adding, “most soldiers and Marines will not be in a very comfortable position” so they should “cherish time with loved ones and download all the music and TV shows that they can.” He explained, “Deployments are sometimes going to be really

busy [and sometimes] really slow. So, be prepared and be comfortable.” He also gave advice to those who are trying to go to Officer Candidate School in any branch. The advice he gave is: “It’s never about you; it never was. The quicker you realize that the more successful you will be.” What he basically is saying is to let go of any individual or personal idea of control or gain, that once you let go of control, you can work better and complement others within the unit.

Major Lim has been a role model to many Marines who have served with him over the years. He continues to be a role model to this day as a father to two children, to the Marines of his new battalion in Myanmar, California, and to me, his youngest brother. If it weren’t for his guidance as an older brother, I wouldn’t be where I am today, and I am thankful for that.

He concluded the interview by telling future Marines and soldiers, “You’re going to be put in tough situations. Don't take any of the small things for granted because you're going to regret not appreciating what was given to you.” I appreciate all he has given me.



Marine Corps Ball 2020