

## U.S. Marine Lands on Highland Beach

John Shoemaker, Commissioner

In our continuing effort to bring recognition to the “Heroes of Highland Beach”, we learned about one of our Police Officers, George Reid, and his experience as a U.S. Marine.

Originally from Jamaica, Officer Reid came to Miami in 1993 and went to North Miami High School. With his uncle’s past in the British Army as an MP (military policeman) and his father’s experience in the Jamaican Army Infantry, George wanted to join the US Marines. As he left for the famous Paris Island facility for three months of training, his mother was not happy, but it was a turning point for him and his future.

George Reid was sent to the sprawling Fort Sill Military base for artillery training. He learned about how to handle the largest artillery pieces in our military, especially the new “Triple Seven”, or the M777. It is a massive artillery piece, with 155 mm shells, that is typically operated by an eight-man crew. Its shells can reach out as far as 24 miles.



Sergeant George Reid became a crew chief and served two deployments in Iraq and two more in Afghanistan during his nine years as a Marine.

After pulling time in Iraq with artillery units, he was transferred into the infantry and was sent to the training academy in California for two months to learn about police strategies and how an infantry unit can support basic policing in places like Afghanistan.

In Afghanistan, he performed as a Platoon Sergeant for the Police engagement team for 2<sup>nd</sup> Battalion 6<sup>th</sup> Marine and was attached to Fox Company doing three patrols a day, morning, noon, and night, near a Marine outpost to ensure base security while supporting local efforts for infrastructure restoration, construction, and the safety of girls going to school. This was a time when the U.S. was spending millions to build new local facilities from schools to water plants. Many Islamists reject the idea of young girls going to school for an education. Unfortunately, too many times they were attacked and killed by the Taliban. For sure, it was always a time to be vigilant every day, month after month.

It was an effort to support local policing backed up by Marines with infantry tactical training for those times when they were attacked by the Taliban.



On one such patrol to check on the status of a local police station under construction, the Marines advanced slowly and cautiously, but for George, it was the day that changed everything.

An IUD or improvised explosive device was ignited by a cell phone and blew up very near Sergeant Reid. It severely wounded him by knocking him unconscious with injuries to both ankles and one of his knees. He was airlifted to Germany and then on to Camp LeJeune. During the months that followed, he had several reconstructive surgeries and endured difficult rehabilitation. Although he loved the Marines, he was honorably and medically discharged in 2014.





He then joined his mom who lived in Port St. Lucie to continue his recovery. He then went on to earn his Bachelor's Degree in Criminal Justice at Strayer University at the Palm Beach Gardens, FL, campus. He earned his Police certification at the Police Academy at the Palm Beach State College in Lake Worth before becoming a police officer for Palm Beach Gardens.

Officer George Reid hopes to continue his education by getting his Master's Degree. Chief Hartmann hired George in 2019 as a police officer for our great town.

George loves the town of Highland Beach due to its "community" persona where people have respect and an affinity for law enforcement. He commented on the good feeling of town's people towards him and others in the Department. But when challenged, he will admit that sometimes we are too complacent. I dug for examples, and he revealed a continuing concern about locking your car when parked (mirrors out means it's not locked), using extra caution even with the new lighted crosswalks, and always looking out for speeders. Unfortunately, we have outsiders coming into the town and looking for unlocked, expensive vehicles to steal. It is a good reminder for everyone.

Yes, Officer Reid is a hero of Highland Beach, along with those in our most effective Police Department, in their continuing role to keep us safe and secure with our property.



Postscript: Officer Reid just completed this month, June, 2022, one more surgery, and hopefully his last, on his spine for injuries received in Afghanistan. He has recovered and back on duty.