



The Combat Center Color Guard takes a moment to observe the fireworks presentation during the Twentynine Palms Independence Day celebration at Luckie Park, Saturday.

Marines honor Independence Day

STORY AND PHOTOS
BY PFC. LEVI SCHULTZ

Since the signing of the Declaration of Independence in 1776, Americans have celebrated the 4th of July by illuminating the night sky with festive displays of fireworks.

The Twentynine Palms community carried on this American tradition during its Independence Day celebration held for the third year in a row at Luckie Park, Saturday.

“With events like these we like to get the base out here to enjoy our community to see what is out here for them,” Randy Councell, community services director, City of Twentynine Palms.

The Combat Center contributed to the patriotism of the event by



The Combat Center Color Guard present the colors during the singing of the National Anthem sung by Horace Miller, retired Marine, during the Twentynine Palms Independence Day celebration at Luckie Park, Saturday.

See **Celebrate pg. A5**

See more Independence Day celebration photos on page A4.

Budget that won't sacrifice readiness

STORY BY
JIM GARAMONE

President Barack Obama assured service members that they “are going to get paid” despite disagreements over the fiscal year 2016 defense budget.

Speaking at the Pentagon following a meeting with his national security team, Obama said it is important to take a long view of the defense budget and understand that the American military must be ready to fight and win today as well as 25 years in the future.

The president said he is not going to accept a budget “that shortchanges our long-term requirements for new technologies, for readiness.”

“We’re not going to eat our seed corn by devoting too much money on things we don’t need now and robbing ourselves of the capacity to make sure that we’re prepared for future threats,” Obama added.

The administration

informed Congress that the president’s senior advisors would recommend that the president veto current House and Senate versions of the National Defense Authorization Act.

“I’ve worked very closely with the chairman and the members of the Joint Chiefs of Staff to develop a budget that is realistic and that looks out into the future and says, ‘This is how we’re going to handle any possible contingency,’” Obama said. “And we can’t do that if we’ve got a budget that shortchanges vital operations and continues to fund things that are not necessary.”

The president said Americans must remember that the U.S. economy powers the best military in history.

“We also have to remind ourselves that the reason we have the best military in the world is, first and foremost, because we’ve got the best

See **Budget pg. A5**

SMP; 20 years of giving back

STORY BY PFC. LEVI SCHULTZ

The Single Marine Program was established in 1995 to quell rising quality-of-life concerns. Today, it has grown Marine Corps-wide as a source of entertainment and volunteering opportunities for Marines and sailors as well as improving base facilities.

This year marks the 20th anniversary of SMP working to improve the lives of active duty service members.

“When the program first started it began with eight recreation centers throughout the Marine Corps,” said Michael Brown, recreation center specialist, SMP. “Now the SMP has grown to 32 centers nationally even as far as Okinawa and Korea.”

SMP maintains representatives throughout commands across the Marine Corps who enable service members to voice their opinions about the installation’s facilities.

“Everyone should know who their SMP representative is within their unit,” Brown said. “If you have an issue, it’s the command team representative that forwards it to the SMP council.”

The Combat Center’s SMP recreation center, 5th Street Zone, provides Marines with a place to unwind on their off-duty hours with activities like billiards, ping-pong, darts and video games. The Zone also provides Marines with exciting recreational opportunities on and off base.

“Events we have hosted include [Ultimate Fighting Championship] clinics, talent shows, concerts, pool parties and trips to the San Diego Zoo,” said Lovetta Scipio, program coordinator, SMP. “We provide the Marines with something to do and are here for their benefit.”

During the holiday season, SMP also provides Marines with a variety of entertaining events and trips. Throughout the month of December, SMP hosts free trips to Big Bear Lake, Palms Springs Desert Dunes Golf Course and a variety of other locations.

“Every holiday season we are busy trying to show the Marines a good time,” Scipio said. “We want to show them they have a home away from home.”

For service members interested in volunteering in the community, SMP provides a resource to become informed about the opportunities available.

“Community involvement helps teach the Marines social and leadership skills,” Scipio said. “We want the Marines to know that this is their community.”

According to Brown, while SMP has been contributing to the Marine Corps for two decades years it still has a bright future ahead of it.

“I hope to see it continue to grow and give young leaders the opportunity to take lead, take charge and have a voice within our Marine Corps,” Brown said. “Whatever level Marines want to take this program to, we will continue to give them the tools and resources to do so.”



Marine Corps' Top Shot

Every week, thousands of fans cast their votes for the best photograph posted on the Corps' Facebook page. This week's top shot comes from Cpl. Krista James.



Lance Cpl. Alex Rowan, a combat engineer with 4th Combat Engineer Battalion, 4th Marine Division, stationed out of Bessemer, Ala., runs to take cover before the Anti-Personnel Obstacle Breaching System detonates during the SAPPER Leaders Course aboard Camp Lejeune, N.C., June 26, 2015.

WHAT I'VE LEARNED

Holly JUSTUS

Dallas, Tx. Field radio operator, Tactical Training Exercise Control Group, 24

Justus enjoys baking as a way to pass the time and getting to know new people. She first began baking in April and gives away what she bakes for others to enjoy.

>I'm a radio operator with Tactical Training Exercise Control Group and have been in the Marine Corps for about three years.

>I grew up in a nice neighborhood in North Central of Dallas, in suburbia. Through work I ended up in a bad environment.

>One of my reasons for joining was to get away from a bad crowd. The Marine Corps provided me an opportunity to start over.

>I have a little brother who is 20-years-old living back home. Growing up together, the challenges that we faced made us grow close.

>He has considered joining the Air Force but is waiting until he finishes college. I feel like my decision to join the military may have helped inspire him to consider doing the same.

>My father was a Marine and was a significant influence on my decision to join. He was proud of his time in the Marine Corps and I wanted to have that as well.

>I enjoy baking; I picked it up as a hobby when I arrived here in April. What got me into it was the fact that I wanted something I could do while I was hanging out in the barracks.

>Previously I was stationed at Marine Corps Base Camp Foster in Okinawa and moved to Marine Corps Base Camp Pendleton for a month before I got transferred here.

>I like to bake all sorts of cakes, cookies and brownies. Most of the time, I give what I bake away to [whomever] wants it. More often than not it goes to the duty.

>It's a great way to get to know new people. Offering someone a cake or cookies can be a great icebreaker.

>It's really awesome to be able to bake for Marines who can't go home on holidays or their birthdays. I know they really appreciate it and that means a lot.

>Just like most things, when learning how to bake you mess up a lot. You won't always make a recipe right the first time and small mistakes can end up in disaster. It's important you learn from your mistakes and move on.

>It takes a lot of patience and time to become good at the craft and can become frustrating at times. Don't become discouraged when something doesn't turn out right.

>Seeing someone else bake something is a great way to learn. I've mostly taught myself through watching Youtube videos and baking shows.

>As long as what I bake makes somebody else happy, then I'm happy. That's what is most important to me. Seeing someone else enjoy what I've made is a great feeling.

>Baking distracts me from things that are bothering me and helps me to stay positive. When I'm feeling down, it helps me to keep my mind off the thing that is troubling me.

>One of the things I've grown to like about the Marine Corps the most is the family and sense of camaraderie.

>I enjoy being able to walk outside the barracks and hang out with people. More often than not they accept you pretty fast.



Interviewed and photographed by Pfc. Levi Schultz

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Combat Center celebrates July 4th with community



PHOTO BY LANCE CPL. CONNOR HANCOCK

Marines from 3rd Battalion, 11th Marine Regiment, watch the firework finale during the Landers Independence Day Celebration in Landers, Calif., July 3, 2015.



PHOTO BY LANCE CPL. CONNOR HANCOCK

Lance Cpl. Kendall Chambers, artillery cannoneer, 3rd Battalion, 11th Marine Regiment, shows Celeste Kellison, 5, the sights on an M777 howitzer during the Landers Independence Day Celebration in Landers, Calif., July 3, 2015.




PHOTO BY LANCE CPL. MEDINA AYALA-LO

Pvt. Christopher Nelson, field artillery cannoneer, sits in a Medium Tactical Vehicle Replacement with Gracie Lynn Sandefur, 7, and Bentley Sandefur, 5, at the Community Center Park during the Yucca Valley Independence Day Celebration, Saturday.


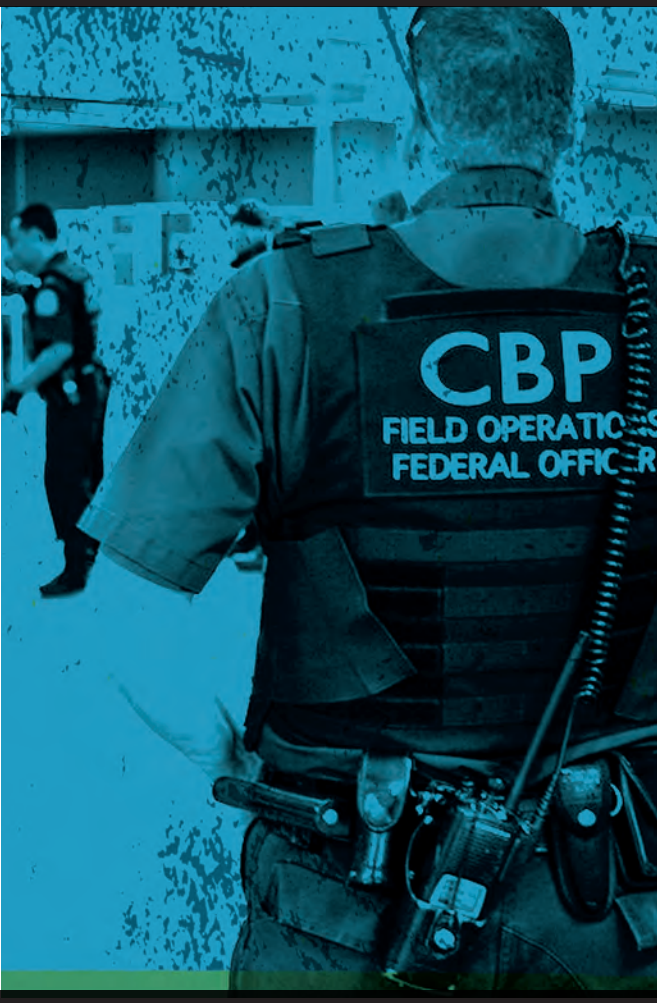



PHOTO BY LANCE CPL. MEDINA AYALA-LO

Pfc. Cristian Acosta, motor transportation operator, 3rd battalion, 11th Marine Regiment, helps Giovanni Mendez, 4, son of Kimberly Mendez, try on a Kevlar and flak jacket at the Community Center Park during the Yucca Valley Independence Day Celebration, Saturday.



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Combat Center patrons and Twentynine Palms community members observe the music synchronized fireworks presentation during the Twentynine Palms Independence Day celebration at Luckie Park, Saturday.



Pfc. Megan Ripley, motor transport operator, Marine Wing Support Squadron 374, helps Melany Cahill, 7, niece of Starr Vassion, native of Twentynine Palms, Calif., as she dismounts from a Medium Tactical Vehicle Replacement during the Twentynine Palms Independence Day celebration at Luckie Park, Saturday.



Marines with Marine Wing Support Squadron 374 enjoy the fireworks presentation atop a Medium Tactical Vehicle Replacement during the Twentynine Palms Independence Day celebration at Luckie Park, Saturday.

Celebrate from pg. A1

providing static displays of vehicles provided by Marine Wing Support Squadron 374 and 1st Tank Battalion. The units displayed two Medium Tactical Vehicle Replacements and two High Mobility Multipurpose Wheeled Vehicles.

“My favorite part is introducing people to the equipment and showing them what we do,” said Pfc. Megan Ripley, motor transportation operator, Marine Wing Support Squadron 374. “I like the kids here, they’re full of energy and it is refreshing to interact with the community and not be in the field.”

Following the playing of the national anthem and the presentation of colors by the Combat

Center Color Guard, Sgt. Maj. Karl Villalino, Combat Center Sergeant Major, took a moment to thank the City of Twentynine Palms for hosting the event.

“These events give us the opportunity to showcase our professionalism, reach out to the community, and let them know we are here for them,” said Lance Cpl. Jamar Hodge, administrative specialist, Combat Center Color Guard. “I’m definitely thankful to be out here and being able to interact with the community.”

The Combat Center also provided static displays and color guard presentations during the Landers Independence Day Celebration July 3 and the Yucca Valley Independence

Day Celebration, July 4. The Twentynine Palms celebration is known in the Morongo Basin area for having the largest fireworks presentation in the area.

“We like to be able to do our own fireworks show because we can shoot off a lot larger shells, up to twice the size of the other shows,” Councill said. “We want the public and everyone to be able to come out and enjoy them.”

The night came to end as the last of the dazzling fireworks were set off in a brilliant finale. With this the Morongo Basin communities celebrated Independence Day in the same patriotic fashion as America’s founding fathers 239 years ago.

Budget from pg. A1

troops in history,” Obama said. “But it’s also because we’ve got a strong economy, and we’ve got a well-educated population.

“And we’ve got an incredible research operation and universities that allow us to create new products that then can be translated into our military superiority around the world,” Obama continued. “[If] we shortchange those, we’re going to be less secure.”

The bottom line, the president said, is that Americans must think long-term and recognize that a strong economy is an integral part of national security.

“America must continue to make the investments that we need in things like education and research that are going to be vital for us to be successful long-term,” Obama said.

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Marines splash into Pacific in AAVs

PHOTOS BY CPL. RYAN C. MAINS



Marines in AAV-P7/A1 Amphibious Assault Vehicles return to the USS Ashland (LSD 48) during splash and recovery training July 2. The Marines with Echo Company, Battalion Landing Team 2nd Battalion, 5th Marines, 31st Marine Expeditionary Unit, went through several different maneuvers during the training.



A Marine uses hand signals to communicate with other AAV-P7/A1 Amphibious Assault Vehicles during splash and recovery training after launching from the USS Ashland (LSD 48) July 2. The Marines with Echo Company, Battalion Landing Team 2nd Battalion, 5th Marines, 31st Marine Expeditionary Unit, went through several different maneuvers during the training.



A Marine operates an AAV-P7/A1 Amphibious Assault Vehicle during splash and recovery training after launching from the USS Ashland (LSD 48) July 2, 2015. The Marines with Echo Company, Battalion Landing Team 2nd Battalion, 5th Marines, 31st Marine Expeditionary Unit, went through several different maneuvers during the training.

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Marines run, gun during Western Regional Combat Match



Cpl. Joseph Alvarez, aircraft rescue and firefighting, Marine Wing Support Squadron 372, Camp Pendleton, runs through the course of fire during the Western Regional Combat Match at the Combat Center Rifle Range, July 1. The courses created challenged the Marines to think quickly while handling weapons safely.

**STORY AND PHOTOS BY
LANCE CPL. THOMAS MUDD**

The Combat Center hosted the annual Western Regional Combat Match at the Rifle Range June 29 through July 2.

The competition, ran by the Marine Corps Combat Shooting Team along with the Combat Center Marksmanship Training Unit, is meant to refine the combat marksmanship skills of the participants with three different weapon systems. The weapons used during the competition were the Benelli M1014 shotgun, the M9 pistol and the M16 or M4 service rifles.

“The Combat Match, also called a Three-gun Match, challenges its participants by having them think while shooting through different scenarios,”

said Sgt. James Marker, instructor, MTU. “The course of fire depends on the imagination of the people conducting the course, so no two courses are the same. During the course of fire certain targets are designated for certain weapons, making the participant think before they engage a target.”

One hundred eight Marines from seven units participated in the competition. The units represented included: Marine Corps Mountain Warfare Training Center, Marine Corps Recruit Depot San Diego, Marine Wing Support Squadron 372, Combat Logistics Battalion 7, the Combat Center MTU, Marine Wing Support Squadron 374 and 3rd Light Armored Reconnaissance Battalion.

“This particular match was open to any Marine west of the Mississippi River,”

said Capt. Jared Dalton, officer in charge, Marine Corps Combat Shooting Team. “The main purpose behind this match is to better prepare the Marines.”

The match is a tool used to create Marines who have a better understanding of each weapons system.

“The traditional ‘table one’ bulls-eye marksmanship is the fundamental base for all marksmanship,” Dalton said. “Combat matches give Marines the opportunity to use skills that are not found in the traditional marksmanship courses. The Marine has to multitask to reload their weapon, walk, engage targets, know which targets to engage and when to engage them.”

The match spanned four days allowing for two days of practice and two days to run the courses of fire for score.

“The point of having different courses of fire every day is to keep the Marines prepared for anything,” said Marker. “The Marines did not know what the course of fire for the range they are on until they get there. This keeps the Marines on their toes and keeps them thinking.”

These matches give the Marines an opportunity to train in a more realistic way and challenge themselves to become better combat marksman.

“The Marines enjoy being able to shoot while moving and improving themselves,” Marker said. “The Marines don’t have the opportunity to participate in these types of matches as often. Having to deal with walls and windows while ensuring that they only hit the targets they are supposed to is a challenge that, I think, makes these courses of fire more realistic.”



Lance Cpl. Brandon Reasoner, semi-refueler operator, Marine Wing Support Squadron 372, Camp Pendleton, practices with the M9 pistol during the Western Regional Combat Match at the Combat Center Rifle Range, June 30. Each course of fire was unique and changed each day to continuously challenge the participating Marines.



Cpl. Eric Rueseler, marksmanship trainer, Weapons and Training Battalion, Camp Pendleton, practices firing on the move during the Western Regional Combat Match at the Combat Center Rifle Range, June 30. The match consisted of two days of practice and two days of recorded matches.



Cpl. Eric Rueseler, marksmanship trainer, Weapons and Training Battalion, Camp Pendleton, fires a Benelli M1014 shotgun during the Western Regional Combat Match at the Combat Center Rifle Range, July 2. The courses of fire gave the Marines the opportunity to use multiple skills during the match.



Lance Cpl. Brandon Reasoner, semi-refueler operator, Marine Wing Support Squadron 372, Camp Pendleton, fires an M16 service rifle during the Western Regional Combat Match at the Combat Center Rifle Range, June 30. The weapons used during the competition included the Benelli M1014 shotgun, the M9 pistol, and the M16 or M4 service rifles.



Combat Center Events

Come visit Sandy Hill Lanes Bowling Center. With well-maintained lanes, large screen televisions, and a digital jukebox, it's a great facility for indoor recreational fun and relaxation. Tournaments are offered regularly and cosmic bowling runs every Friday and Saturday evening. For more information, contact 760-830-6422.

Visit the Sand Trap Grill at the Desert Winds Golf Course, The Grill brings back old favorites like the charbroiled hamburger, salads, hot dogs and breakfast. Their expansive seating accommodates large groups of people. For more information, contact the golf course at 760-830-6132.

For free golf lessons, visit the Desert Winds Golf Course. Golf school for adults will be offered every Tuesday at 9 a.m. and course for ladies will be offered every Wednesday at 9 a.m. Range balls and green fee is included in the course. For more information, contact 760-830-3011.

To keep your mind active this summer check out the Combat Center Library's Summer Reading Program. The six week program runs from June 22 to August 3 and is open to all hands. The event will conclude with prize drawings to those who have completed all five reading levels. Visit the library for the complete Read to the Rhythm Guidelines and schedule of events. For more information, contact 760-830-6875.

Sign up for tackle football to compete for the number one team aboard the Combat Center. Registration will be open until July 31 with the season lasting from September 1 to November 2. All entry forms must be approved by the unit commanding officer and leagues will be limited to the first six teams that register. For more information, contact 760-830-4092.



Building a Badder Dinosaur

'Jurassic World' takes a big new bite out of the classic franchise

Sunset Cinema

Friday, July 10 6:00 p.m. — Jurassic World (3-D), PG-13 9:00 p.m. — Entourage, R Saturday, July 11 12:30 p.m. — Jurassic World, PG-13 3:30 p.m. — Aloha, PG-13 6:00 p.m. — San Andreas, PG-13 8:30 p.m. — Insidious Chapter 3, PG-13 Sunday, July 12 12:30 p.m. — San Andreas (3-D), PG-13 3:00 p.m. — Jurassic World (3-D), PG-13 6:00 p.m. — Spy, R 8:30 p.m. — Insidious Chapter 3, PG-13	Monday, July 13 7:00 p.m. — Entourage, R Tuesday, July 14 7:00 p.m. — Jurassic World (3-D), PG-13 Wednesday, July 15 5:00 p.m. — San Andreas, PG-13 7:30 p.m. — Spy, R Thursday, July 16 5:00 p.m. — Tomorrowland, PG 8:00 p.m. — Poltergeist 2015, PG-13 Friday, July 17 6:00 p.m. — Inside Out (3-D), PG 8:00 p.m. — Dope, R
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“Jurassic World” Starring Chris Pratt, Bryce Dallas Howard and Vincent D’Onofrio Directed by Colin Trevarrow Rated PG-13

NEIL POND

The ingredients to a new dinosaur movie are a lot the ones for a dinosaur: Bigger, louder and more teeth.

It’s been 22 years since director Steven Spielberg’s Jurassic Park, which broke new ground in comput-

er-generated special effects and left audiences gasping for air with its romping, stomping tale of bio-engineered prehistoric creatures running amok. But after two sequels, the Jurassic franchise lost much of its roar—and its box-office bite. Audiences were no longer gaga for lifelike, big-screen dinosaurs.

In Jurassic World, the owners and operators of a sprawling new “living dinosaur” theme park, re-established after the downfall of the original facility, are faced with the

same problem. “No one’s impressed by a dinosaur anymore,” says Claire (Bryce Dallas Howard), the corporate operations manager. Visitors are still coming—up to 20,000 a day—but teenagers barely look up from their smartphones at a stegosaurus, investors are clamoring for greater return on their dollars, and sponsors want something with more wow and pow.

What to do? Create a bigger, badder dinosaur. Meet Indominus Rex, cooked up in Jurassic World’s lab from a monstrous mixture of dino-DNA super-traits. It’s nastier, angrier and more nightmare-inducing than any other creature, even the park’s venerable T. Rex.

What could possibly go wrong?

Steven Spielberg is executive producer this time around, but newcomer director Colin Trevarrow loads his film with clever and nostalgic throwbacks to him and his craft, from specific camera shots to an original Jurassic Park t-shirt (one character’s EBay find) and a holographic

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Five NATO nations kick off Platinum Lion



Bulgarian Army Col. Iavor Mateev and U.S. Marine Corps Capt. Michael R. McNicoll talk following the opening ceremony of Platinum Lion 15-3, Monday. The two-week training exercise is designed to strengthen the partnerships between the NATO nations and share knowledge to help improve their military skill sets.



A Romanian soldier holds his nation's colors next to color bearers from NATO partners during the opening ceremony of Platinum Lion 15-3, Monday. The two-week training exercise is designed to strengthen the partnerships between the NATO nations and share knowledge to help improve their military skill sets.

STORY BY STAFF SGT. WAYNE EMNISTON

NOVO SELO TRAINING AREA, Bulgaria - Marines with Black Sea Rotational Force and service members from Bulgaria, Romania, the United Kingdom and Albania kicked-off Exercise Platinum Lion 15-3, Monday.

The two-week training exercise is designed to strengthen the partnerships between the NATO nations and share knowledge to help improve their military skill sets.

“Platinum Lion is designed to promote regional cooperation and foster interoperability between our nations in order to combat security threats,” said U.S. Marine Capt. Michael R. McNicoll, commanding officer of Golf Company, 2nd Battalion, 8th Marine Regiment with BSRF. “We will do this through realistic training where we can share our ideas, thoughts, techniques, tactics and procedures.”

The exercise consists of classroom training, multiple live-fire events, military police training, maneuver training and one culminating event. The culminating event will consist of a three-day live-fire platoon attack exercise that is designed to provide a challenging and realistic training scenario.

McNicoll was optimistic on what the training will provide for not only the Marines but for all the NATO nations involved in the training.

“I believe we have a lot to learn from each other,” McNicoll explained. “I look forward to seeing how we progress throughout this exercise together.”

Bulgarian Army Col. Iavor Mateev, Head of the Joint Military Facilities Department at the Bulgarian Defense Ministry, was in attendance at the opening ceremony.

Mateev offered words of encouragement and explained that similar exercises in the past have a track record of success, serving to advance the mission of NATO.

“Platinum Lion became one of the greatest examples in Europe for the real implementation of connected forces and NATO smart defense initiatives,” said Mateev.

Mateev was truly proud of the joint training facility at Novo Selo and believed it to be a world class military site for the conduct of the exercise.

It is more important that our great nations work together as part of NATO and build these partnerships, he said.

“I wish everyone success, and that each of you meet the goals you came here to accomplish,” said Mateev.



U.S. Marine Corps Sgt. Christopher E. Propst observes non-lethal weapons training with military policemen from the Albanian Land Force as part of Exercise Platinum Lion 15-3 Monday. Marines from the Law Enforcement Detachment, 2nd Battalion, 8th Marine Regiment and the military policemen from Albania participated in joint non-lethal weapons training as part of an extended syllabus that will go throughout the exercise.

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