



Anti-tank missileman with Anti-Armor Section, Weapons Company, Ground Combat Element Integrated Task Force, fire the MK153 shoulder-launched multipurpose assault weapon during the enemy counter attack portion of a Marine Corps Operational Test and Evaluation Activity assessment at Range 107, March 7.

ITF Marines kick off MCOTEA assessment

STORY AND PHOTOS BY SGT. ALICIA R. LEADERS

After completing five months of training at Marine Corps Base Camp Lejeune, North Carolina, with more than 20 live-fire exercises and one week of trial runs at Marine Corps Air Ground Combat Center Twentynine Palms, California, the infantry Marines of the Ground Combat Element Integrated Task Force officially began the Marine Corps Operational Test and Evaluation Activity assessment, Saturday.

More than 120 male and female volunteers are being assessed, individually and collectively, while executing the tasks as one of the following: Infantry rifleman (0311), machine gunner (0331), mortarman (0341), infantry assaultman (0351), and anti-tank missileman (0352). This assessment will help the Marine Corps develop more concise service-wide training



Sgt. Hannah S. Jacobson, machine gunner with Weapons Company, Ground Combat Element Integrated Task Force, provides close supporting fires for their squad while engaging targets with the M240B Medium Machine Gun during a Marine Corps Operational Test and Evaluation Activity assessment at Range 107, March 10.

and readiness standards for each MOS above.

Many of the volunteers going through the MCOTEA assessment come from a non-infantry background, such as Sgt. Hannah S. Jacobson, whose primary military occupational specialty is an intelligence analyst, and who is currently exe-

cuting tasks as a machine gunner.

"I volunteered because it's going to help my job as an intel analyst to learn the different terrain that grunts operate in, and I don't like when people say you can't do something, especially when it's gender based," said Jacobson, machine

gunner with Weapons Company, GCEITF. "I figured I'm an average female Marine with a first-class combat fitness test and physical fitness test, and I figured if I can do it, I know there are females out there who are far superior than me when it comes to physi-

See **ITF** pg. A6



The Silent Drill Platoon performs a movement, extending the muzzles of their rifles with attached bayonets, for hundreds of Combat Center patrons during their performance at Lance Cpl. Torrey L. Gray Field, Tuesday. See page A4-A5 for story and photos.

Magnificent 7th Welcomes Palm Desert to Combat Center



Chris Bennett, marketing manager, City of Palm Desert, operates a simulated .50-caliber machine gun at the Combat Convoy Simulator during a tour of the Combat Center, March 5. The CCS allowed the representatives to experience how Marines respond to one another while in a simulated environment.

STORY AND PHOTOS BY LANCE CPL. THOMAS MUDD

7th Marine Regiment Marines and Sailors gave members from the Chamber of Commerce for the city of Palm Desert a tour of the Combat Center, March 5.

Palm Desert officially adopted 7th Marine Regiment on Dec 11, 2014. They support Marines in the regiment by putting together care packages during the unit's deployments, and sponsoring events like family days throughout the year. The Magnificent 7th invited the Palm Desert Chamber of Commerce members to the Combat Center to give them a better understanding of the training Marines participate in and to show their gratitude.

The visit began with a tour of one of the Combat Center's rifle ranges, which allowed the members to gain a larger appreciation for some of the weapons and associated training Marines experience. This was followed by a tour of the Vehicle Roll-Over Simulator and the Combat Convoy Simulator aboard Camp Wilson.

"Advances in technology have provided Marines modern immersive training and simulation systems that develop our tactical and technical proficiency," said Lt. Col. Jared Spurlock, executive officer, 7th Marine Regiment, "Observing the members learning about these capabilities truly demonstrated the bond and relationship with the local community these types of visits foster."

"It was eye opening," said Barbra Deboom, president and chief executive officer, Palm Desert Chamber of Commerce. "The organization it takes to put on the training and seeing what the Marines do here is overwhelming."

After the tour of the rifle range and Camp Wilson, Chamber of Commerce members visited the 7th Regiment Command Post. They

See **Tour** pg. A6

Marine Corps' Top Shot

Every week, thousands of fans vote for the week on the best photograph, posted on the Corps' Facebook page. This week's top shot comes from Sgt. Jamean Berry.



He captured this photo of Marines performing maintenance checks on an AH-1Z Viper aboard the USS Anchorage, March 2.



Reprinted from the Observation Post
March 8, 1961

“O.P.” celebrates 4th anniversary

Cities and towns throughout the United States have certain enterprises that are of great interest and assistance to the people of that community. Prominent among these enterprises are the local Chamber of Commerce, the public relations departments of various firms, the radio and television units and the newspapers.

Aboard this Base we have one section which, in a degree of comparison, is similar to a collection of all those civilian enterprises—the Information Service Office, which celebrates its fourth anniversary this month.

Every major command throughout the Marine Corps, divisions, aircraft wings, bases, air facilities, recruit depots, etc. have with their organization such as a section.

The duties of this particular command function is primarily to publicize the Marine Corps not only to the public but also to Marines.

In publicizing the Marine Corps to the public, we are in actually telling the public what is happening to their tax money and informing them of their defense system. To get the “word” out to the populace of this country, we use the civilian news media of newspapers, radio and television stations.

Most editorial and journalistic “copy” is prepared and delivered or mailed by the Information Service

Office. To prepare this copy, a staff of reporters, writers and rewrite men furnish both the observation post and civilian newspapers with articles and stories.

One important part of these releases is photographic material prepared by the Base Photographic Laboratory.

Here the section is divided into sub-sections: the civilian release section, supervised by Gunnery Sergeant Ed Barum, who controls the reporting assignments of Sergeants Clair E. Helmen and John E. Conick, Corporal John A. Rucker and Lance Corporal James D. Wilson.

Having the Largest staff of reporters, the civilian release sub-section covers the majority of events which take place about the Base, such as the High Power Rifle Match held this past weekend.

These reporters are also called upon to venture into the field with a photographer to cover a field problem or live firing of the various weapons of the various commands here.

The Observation Post newspaper is staff by three Marines: Private First Class Tom Polston who serves as Editor, Corporal B. A. Llacuna as Associate Editor and Corporal Ron Fraizer as Sports Editor.

Publication of the paper is on Wednesday of each week. On the previous Monday, the Editor

and Information Services Officer, Captain E. J. Clarkson, travel to Apple Valley (near Victorville) to work with the contracted printers in publishing the paper.

The two primary purposes of the Observation Post are to inform and entertain the personnel of this command of this command of the events, orders, regulations, entertainment, athletic events and other informative material of this command and the Marine Corps.

To round-out the office staff, Corporal Gary Marshall fills the radio and television sections and prepares tape recordings of the interviews with Marines for the Fleet Home Town News Center and maintains contact with local radio and television stations.

Lance Corporal James F. Beck serves as the office librarian and historian, with also duties of supplying Fleet Home Town News Center with completed forms of personnel upon promotion, meritorious masts, etc.

A prominent section within the office is the art department, which is supervised by Lance Corporal Manny Darisay. Along with Private Edward Crawford, the two Marines produce many signs and posters for activities of this command and furnish the Observation Post with various cartoons and illustrations as needed.

BIRTH ANNOUNCEMENTS

Norah Jane Ennis
Born Feb. 15, 2015
Born to Miles and Lilly Ennis

Brinn Lee Harmon
Born Feb. 19, 2015
Born to Vanessa and Michael Harmon

Camila Sofia Vasquez-Gomez
Born Feb. 20, 2015
Born to Edwin Vazquez and Nelly Gomez

Jameson Henry Ratajczyk
Born Feb. 21, 2015
Born to William and Mary Ratajczyk

Liam James Murphy
Born Feb. 22, 2015
Born to Mark and Brittney Murphy

Liam Robert Waddington
Born on Feb. 23, 2015
Born to James and Dana Waddington

Teagan Louise Davidson
Born Feb. 25, 2015
Born to Aaron and Kimberly Davidson

Ember Elizabeth Hume
Born Feb. 26, 2015
Born to Shayna and Daniel Hume

Guinevere Moira
Born Feb. 26, 2015
Born to Jeffery and Tegan Walsh

CROSSWORD

- Across**
- P.D.Q., on a memo
 - Divvy up
 - Quaker grain
 - ___ Lisa
 - Disposed
 - Fairy-tale menace
 - Short golf stroke
 - Dean Martin's "That's ___"
 - Georgetown athlete
 - Representation of one's traits and skills in pagan religions
 - Pizza cooks
 - Schlitz's maker
 - Clarinetist Goodman
 - Gourmet's sense zone
 - Guarantees
 - 1992 Edward James Olmos film
 - "The Genius" alias
 - Air condition?
 - Kal-___ (dog food)
 - Genre named for a river's mouth
 - Edible seaweed used for sushi
 - Pseudopod-forming organism
 - West of hip-hop
 - Olympics music penner
 - Owed item
 - It's a free country
 - Barbershop sweepings
 - Back: Prefix
 - The Titanic, e.g.
 - Impertinent look
 - Booted a grounder, say
 - Bring aboard
 - Hair styling substances
 - Holmes' creator
 - One way to begin

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60					61				62			
63					64				65			

- Down**
- Roadie's charge
 - Eggdrop ___
 - Just not that into
 - Benefactors
 - Forceful flow
 - Spin doctor
 - Nuts
 - Calvary initials
 - Overbrim
 - Arles exclamation
 - In a previous time
 - Eschew excuses
 - Most of the globe
 - Halls of ___ (academe)
 - Speedily
 - Put one's trust in
 - Many churches are named for her
 - Small, as a Beanie Baby
 - Much-anticipated time
 - Scaly inflammation
 - Kevin of "SNL"
 - Alveoli
 - Whence Goya's duchess
 - N.L. Central team, on a scoreboard
 - Feathered bigfoot
 - Field portrayal
 - Passengers' area in a plane
 - Teachers' statuses
 - Boris' sidekick
 - First-aid case
 - New Hampshire town
 - '50s Ford flop
 - Single bonus?
 - Carded at a club
 - Mower name
 - Make more watery
 - Blarney's locale
 - Pour forth
 - Pen filler?
 - Historic time
 - Bad way to fall

SUDOKU

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Last week's answers

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2	7	8	6	3	1	4	9	5
3	1	6	5	4	9	7	8	2

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In San Diego:
 - Club Mustang, 2200 University Ave.
 - Club San Diego, 3955 Fourth St.
 - Get It On Shoppe, 3219 Mission Blvd.
 - Main Street Motel, 3494 Main St.
 - Vulcan Baths, 805 W. Cedar St.
In National City:
 - Dream Crystal, 15366 Highland Ave.
 - Sports Auto Sales, 1112 National City Blvd.

- In Twentynine Palms:**
 - Adobe Smoke Shop, 6441 Adobe Rd.
 - STC Smoke Shop, 6001 Adobe Rd.
 - K Smoke Shop, 5865A Adobe Rd.
In Yucca Valley:
 - Yucca Tobacco Mart, 57602 29 Palms Hwy.
 - Puff's Tobacco Mart, 57063 29 Palms Hwy.
In Palm Springs:
 - Village Pub, 266 S. Palm Canyon Dr.
 - Whispering Palms Apts., 449 E. Arenas Road
 - NYPD Pizza, 260-262 N. Palm Canyon Drive
 For the complete orders, but not off-limits, check out the Combat Center's official-website at <http://www.29palms.marines.mil>

WHAT I'VE LEARNED

Alexander ROOD

Sacramento, Ca. Lance Cpl., ??, Food service specialist, 3rd Light Armored Reconnaissance Battalion

Rood was 15 years old when he played his first show for a crowd of 200 people. He draws inspiration from bands such as Danzig, Blink-182 and The Doors.

> **I grew up playing music** and I've been playing for nine years.

> **I play the trombone,** clarinet and the bass. I started when I was in fifth grade and I learned on my own mostly by just messing around with the instruments.

> **I started taking band class** and I liked it. Eventually, I just talked to a couple of friends and we started a band. Soon enough, we started playing shows and making money.

> **I've been in three different bands.** The first band I was in, was for about a year and a half. The last one, for about three years.

> **We had a van** and we would drive to play our shows. Other than playing shows and the internet, we had a demo that we handed out and that's how we got the word out about our music.

> **My favorite instrument** to play is the bass. I like the way it sounds.

> **I like music that provokes** feeling and sometimes it's nice to listen to music without words. Music without words provokes a lot more feeling than music with words.

> **I've been in the Marine Corps** for about a year and a half. The reason I joined

the Marine Corps is because I wanted to get away from home and do something different. If I was going to join the military, I was going to go all out.

> **My grandfather and** my cousin were in the Marine Corps.

> **I like the structure** the military has to offer and the different types of people I've met.

> **I can say I learned** structure and discipline while in the band and I can now apply it to other aspects of life.

> **Being here makes** you realize how small the world is. There are so many people from different backgrounds and I never thought they would be interested in the same things as me. Discovering stuff like that is always really cool.

> **I hate speaking** in front of people but I can get on stage and play music in front of a crowd. It's just different when I'm playing music.

> **We played metal music** in our band and we wrote our own songs.

> **Metal is my favorite** genre of music. Sometimes it's just nice to zone out. There are times when I'm in a good mood and other times when I'm frustrated. For me, the music I listen to depends on



how I'm feeling.

> **I have two younger** brothers and a younger sister. My family has been supportive of my love for music. I would like to start playing regularly again.

> **I'm also really into cars.** I learned about cars through friends, but a lot of it was self-taught.

> **The car I have now** is

my third one. I like working on it because there's always something new. Sometimes it is frustrating, sometimes it is really fun.

> **The structure that** I learned from being in a band before the Marine Corps has definitely helped me. I am more willing to do the things I don't want to do, when I know I have to do them.

INTERVIEWED AND PHOTOGRAPHED BY LANCE CPL. MEDINA AYALA-LO

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U.S. Marines, Georgian soldiers

PHOTOS AND STORY
BY CALVIN SHAMOON

HOHENFELS, Germany – Georgian soldiers and U.S. Marines completed their Mission Rehearsal Exercise with a final mission in a simulated Afghan village, at the Joint Multinational Readiness Center, Hohenfels, Germany, Feb. 26. The MRE concluded at the Salaam Bazar, which Georgians called “Operation Mgheli”.

“What the MRE is designed to do is put the Georgians in an environment where they deal with civilians in the battlespace while having a living, breathing enemy in the form of the OPFOR (opposing forces) that’s working against them,” said Maj. James Geiger, the officer in charge of the Georgia Liaison Team. “The Georgians also have a higher headquarters that they have to interact with and make sure all their procedures are correct.”

Upon completion of the final portion of the MRE, the Marines embedded with the 43rd Georgian Infantry Battalion will make final preparations before deploying to Afghanistan.

The training events include close air support training where U.S. Marines and Georgian troops communicate

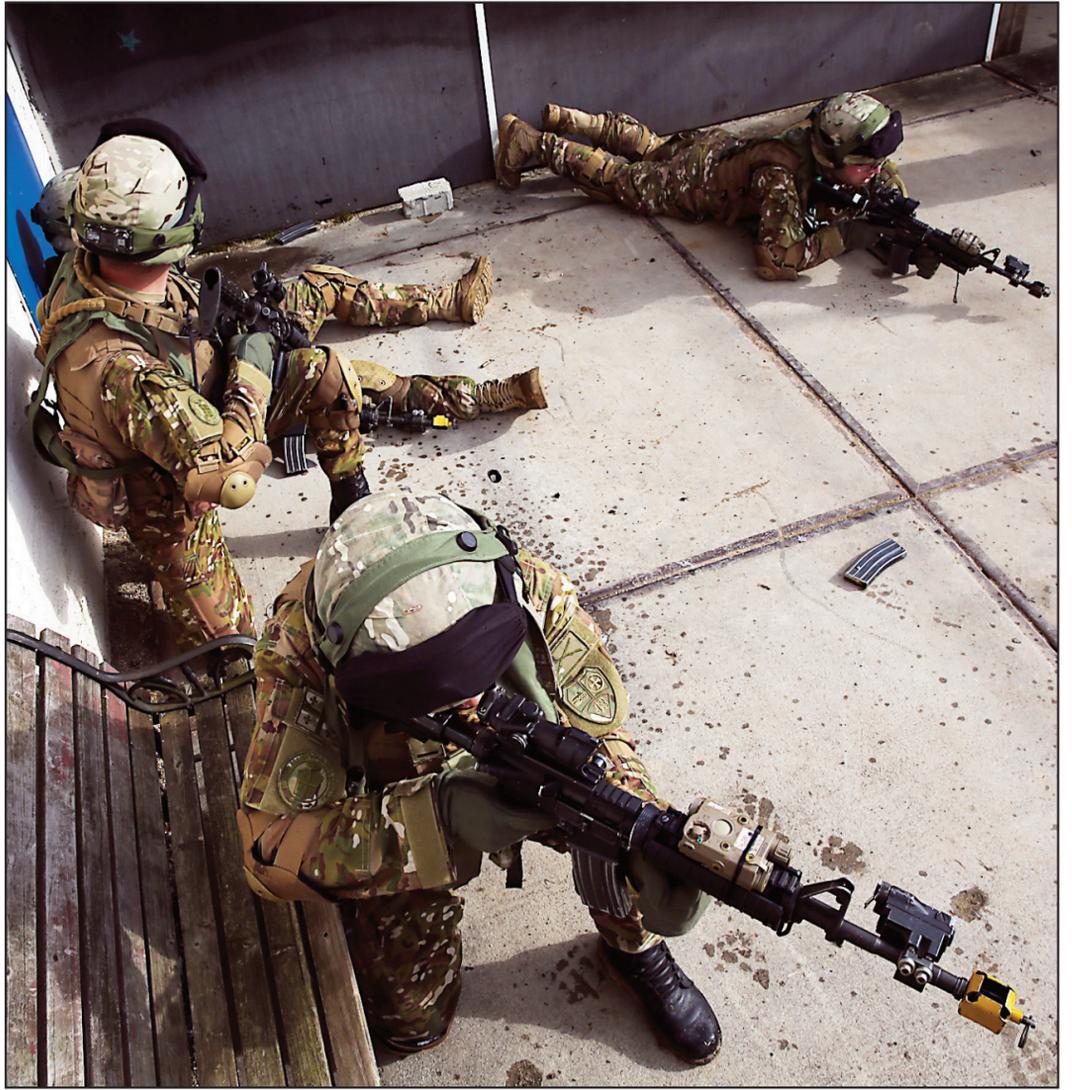
with another to coordinate the use of air evacuation and strikes on the enemy targets. The second portion is the situational training exercise.

Georgian troops patrol through simulated Afghan villages, talked to actors role-playing key leaders and village elders to support regional security, receive intelligence on enemy and provide humanitarian aid.

The Georgian battalion engaged in a six-day event where they complete operations with minimal support from the training teams. Georgian soldiers and U.S. Marines must integrate and face challenges replicating what they may face during their deployment to Afghanistan. During the MRE, the forward operating base simulates Bagram Air Field in Afghanistan, to include a bazar within the base.

For the six-day event of the MRE, the Georgian soldiers alongside U.S. Marines have to make sure the Afghan role-players are supportive of their presence and ensure villagers are willing to cooperate with the troops.

I think the relationship is very positive, I feel we built a level of trust where we can be



U.S. Marines and soldiers from the 43rd Georgian Infantry Battalion post security as another soldier attends to a simulated casualty during the Mission Rehearsal Exercise at the Joint Multinational Readiness Center, Hohenfels, Germany, Feb. 22.

open with each other and we can discuss what we are doing well and where we need to improve, said Geiger.

The Georgian troops also received support from Moldovan soldiers who are replicating Afghan National Army and Afghan Police Force. The forces work together to ensure prosperity and stability in

the region.

“I’ve seen dramatic improvement,” said Geiger. “Where they have bloomed, it has really been here at the MRE they’ve shown significant improvement in my opinion.”

The Marine Corps Security Cooperation Group trains the Georgia Training Team and the GLT in cultural

emersion, basic foreign language and foreign weapon systems.

At our home station we did all of our annual training, marksmanship and basic combat skills, but we could not get the advisor training that MCSCG specializes in, said Geiger. The Marine Corps Security Cooperation Group prepared us for this

deployment.

The Marine Corps Security Cooperation Group provides logistics, communication and operational support throughout the exercise. Marine Forces Europe oversees the Georgia Deployment Program while MCSCG handles the MRE and ensures its success.

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The Combat Center has its own YouTube channel

Find it at

<http://www.youtube.com/user/CombatCenterPAO>.



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Soldiers maintain Combat Readiness



U.S. Marines, soldiers from the 43rd Georgian Infantry Battalion and Moldovan soldiers playing the role of Afghan National Army soldiers, rush to cover after receiving simulated enemy fire during the Mission Rehearsal Exercise at the Joint Multinational Readiness Center, Hohenfels, Germany, Feb. 26.



Soldiers from the 43rd Georgian Infantry Battalion sprint toward a CH-47 'Chinook' during the Mission Rehearsal Exercise at the Joint Multinational Readiness Center, Hohenfels, Germany, Feb. 22.



A soldier from the 43rd Georgian Infantry Battalion dismounts a vehicle during the Mission Rehearsal Exercise at the Joint Multinational Readiness Center, Hohenfels, Germany, Feb. 23.



A soldier from the 43rd Georgian Infantry Battalion carries an Afghan role-player with a simulated injury during the Mission Rehearsal Exercise at the Joint Multinational Readiness Center, Hohenfels, Germany, Feb. 21.



U.S. Marines and Georgian soldiers from the 43rd Georgian Infantry Battalion, enter a building after receiving simulated enemy fire during the Mission Rehearsal Exercise at the Joint Multinational Readiness Center, Hohenfels, Germany, Feb. 22.

HUMANITY'S LAST HOPE ISN'T HUMAN

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cal fitness who can. If I can't make it, then I will have my own opinion on whether or not females can be in the infantry."

Although the Marines have worked together back at Camp Lejeune, the assessment serves as a first-time experience for most infantrymen because the Integrated Task Force is the first unit they've been to where they work closely with female Marines.

"We're learning how to work with females, and that's a challenge, and it's a challenge accepted because we have to learn how they work, and they have to learn how we work, and you have to learn how to get along with each other because we're here for the same purpose," said Cpl. Kevin A. Miller, team leader with 2nd Platoon, Company A, GCEITF.

In order for MCOTEA to collect data and gather research

for the assessment, each Marine is equipped with a heart-rate monitor, GPS device, and a weapons-player pack attached to each weapon, which shows researchers the effectiveness of an individual's firing accuracy. Male and female volunteers work hand-in-hand throughout the assessment. MCOTEA randomly selects the Marine volunteers, switching billets within their MOS, and rotating fire teams and squads.

"It's a challenge to go ahead and have a new team each time, and get to learn how people move and how people bound together," Miller said. "On the first day of the assessment, we assaulted through the initial three objectives, which was the one-click hike up to the conex box, movement to contact, and the casualty evacuation."

For the infantry Marines, one full assessment cycle is a two-day

event. It consists of a day of offensive operations immediately followed by a day of defensive operations. The Marines are on a four-day rotation, meaning two-full assess-

During offensive operations, the Marines suit up with combat utilities, flak, Kevlar, a 36-pound combat load, and depending on their billet, carry one of the

The assaultmen, machine gunners, mortarmen, and anti-tank missilemen carry their personal weapons, as well as their job-specific weapon system, and ammunition. During defensive operations, infantrymen carry a combat load of more than 50 pounds.

"To me, defensive operations is the hardest part of the whole assessment," said Miller. "It's a 7-kilometer hike with a sustainment load, weapon, flak, Kevlar, and full (personal protective equipment). You have to go as fast as your slowest person, which can make it even longer, and the hike becomes very hard because you're hiking over sand and it becomes exhausting. Once we reach the objective, we then spend two hours switching on and off to dig two-man fighting holes."

Each MOS has its specific objectives during the assessment, both

in the offense and in the defense. Miller and Jacobson both agree the assessment has its mental and physical challenges, but at the end of the day, they are here to finish what they started.

"I figure there is an end point to every start point," Miller added. "At the end of the day, I know it's going to make me stronger, and I know it's going to make me better. When this whole thing is over, we'll be able to look back and say 'hey, look what we just did.'"

From October 2014 to July 2015, the Ground Combat Element Integrated Task Force will conduct individual and collective skills training in designated combat arms occupational specialties in order to facilitate the standards based assessment of the physical performance of Marines in a simulated operating environment performing specific ground combat arms tasks.

"We're learning how to work with females, and that's a challenge, and it's a challenge accepted because we have to learn how they work, and they have to learn how we work, and you have to learn how to get along with each other because we're here for the same purpose."

- Cpl. Kevin A. Miller

ments are conducted in a four-day period, with one day of rest during their time at Twentynine Palms.

following weapons: M4 Modular Weapon System, M27 Infantry Automatic Rifle, or the M16 A4 Modular Weapon System.

Tour from A1

introduced themselves and shook hands with the Marines and Sailors they support through the adoption.

"It is always good to receive support from the communities that you live in," Spurlock said. "Receiving thanks and gratitude from community leaders means a lot to the [regiment]. We hope to continue building relations with the city of Palm Desert."



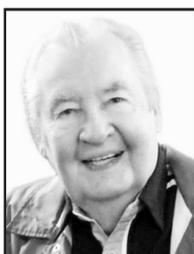
Wendy Solomon, chief financial officer, Desert Business Machines, City of Palm Desert, aims an M4 service rifle during a tour of the Combat Center, March 5. The representatives were given the opportunity to see the equipment Marines train with prior to deployment.



The Combat Center has its own YouTube channel Find it at <http://www.youtube.com/user/CombatCenterPAO>.

TOUGH MINDED OPTIMISM

by Lou Gerhardt



This is the second in a series of essays written by my friend Herb Orban, who lives daily with all the difficulties associated with having Stage IV Metastatic Cancer. Herb and his wife Gina are dealing with this challenging situation with a positive attitude. Read on. More later.

"Dearest Dr. Lou, this is my anticlimactic victory lap for my approaching demise from my beloved desert. The last weeks have been good. People are speaking of death besides in that black shad less parking lot at Weifel's, which truly is "hell!"

Everyone knows that I don't want a bad, painful, undignified death like so many and friends "suffered". My family, and Gina & I know that is MOST DIFFICULT control (neatly) as a California resident.

Many have called asking me to set up a "Yucca Valley Death Cafe" <http://deathcafe.com/how/>. YES, YES, if my "DEATH HOLDS OFF" I would be happy to facilitate, at no charge, a few groups of 8 - 12 sober adults before summer. NO HDWD questions!

I've survived three surgeries this year. Gina is unfortunately NOT learning to lie in bed and just sleep, since every time I move she inquires: "what's wrong." I screwed up three medications this week & slept an extra 10 hours. "So what, this is all about just being old."

You need to now listen to your heart/head and discuss with your attorney and doctor. There is no need to die in pain or crapping like a zombie in bed. My dearest friends, you only get one chance, plan this event to be the dignified, demise your heart demands. Everybody else's rules are off!"

This column sponsored by:

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"Then Peter said unto them, Repent, and be baptized every one of you in the name of Jesus Christ for the remission of sins, and ye shall receive the gift of the Holy Ghost." Acts 2:38

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WeekINPhotos

Integrated Task Force Marines Welcome Combat Center Leadership



Leadership of the Ground Combat Element Integrated Task Force speak with Sgt. Maj. Karl Villalino, Combat Center Sergeant Major, about the Marine Corps Operational Test and Evaluation Activity assessment Marines of the Task Force will conduct over the next several weeks, March 4.



Maj. Gen. Lewis A. Craparotta, Combat Center Commanding General, speaks with Maj. John A. Dalby, infantry functional test manager of Marine Corps Operational Test and Evaluation Activity, about the MCOTEA assessment Marines of the Ground Combat Element Integrated Task Force will conduct over the next several weeks, March 4.



Leadership of the Ground Combat Element Integrated Task Force speak with Maj. Gen. Lewis A. Craparotta, Combat Center Commanding General, about the Marine Corps Operational Test and Evaluation Activity assessment Marines of the Task Force will conduct over the next several weeks, March 4.



Leadership of the Ground Combat Element Integrated Task Force speak with Maj. Gen. Lewis A. Craparotta, Combat Center Commanding General, and Sgt. Maj. Karl Villalino, about the Marine Corps Operational Test and Evaluation Activity assessment Marines of the Task Force will conduct over the next several weeks, March 4.

Photos by: Sgt. Alicia R. Leaders

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Integrated Task Force AAV Platoon begins assessment

PHOTOS BY CPL. PAUL S. MARTINEZ



Sgt. Michael Meyer, left, crew chief, and Cpl. Kathryn Bynum, rear crewman, both with Amphibious Assault Vehicle Platoon, Company B, Ground Combat Element Integrated Task Force, work together to break track on an AAV during the assessment at Range 500, March 5.



Cpl. Kelsey Darling, rear crewman, Amphibious Assault Vehicle Platoon, Company B, Ground Combat Element Integrated Task Force, assists in the reload of a Mk-19 40 mm automatic grenade launcher during the assessment at Range 500, March 6.



Marines with Amphibious Assault Vehicle Platoon, Company B, Ground Combat Element Integrated Task Force, watch as their fellow crewmen send rounds down range during the assessment at Range 500, March 3.



Marines with Amphibious Assault Vehicle Platoon, Company B, Ground Combat Element Integrated Task Force, assault targets down range during the assessment at Range 500, March 3.

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Combat Center hosts first Motocross Jam Fest

Derek Garland, motocross rider, Metal Mulisha Moto Team, performs a stunt during the Motocross Jam Fest at a temporary dirt track between Dunham Street and 13th Street aboard the Combat Center, March 7.



Derek Garland, motocross rider, Metal Mulisha Moto Team, talks to the crowd during the Motocross Jam Fest at a temporary dirt track between Dunham Street and 13th Street aboard the Combat Center, March 7. The event was free and open to Marines, sailors and their families.

**PHOTOS AND STORY BY
 LANCE CPL. MEDINA AYALA-LO**

It is a warm, picturesque day and onlookers eagerly await the start of the show. A rider's engine roars to life and he quickly ascends the ramp and rockets through the air. He flips over backward, bringing his motorcycle with him. The crowd goes wild.

Marine Corps Community Services hosted the Motocross Jam Fest at a temporary dirt track between Dunham Street

and 13th Street, March 7, 2015.

"One of the key things that Marines would like to see MCCA put together is sports competitions," said Celina Laserna, special events manager, MCCA. "We have a lot of Marines here who are professional riders and we also have lot of resources on base. I think this was a great idea to put together."

The event was free and open to Marines, sailors and their families. It included concession stands, motorcycle stunt performances by professional

motocross riders, and a Los Angeles-based band, GrizFolk, performed rock music. Fifteen professional riders, three of which were freestyle riders, participated in the festivities. The freestyle riders from the Metal Mulisha Moto Team performed a series of stunts on a 13 foot ramp and afterward, all of the riders went through a designated stunt course.

"I think it's really cool that the base has events like this," said Lance Cpl. Cordaryl Robertson, food service specialist, 3rd Light Armored Reconnaissance

Battalion. "It gives Marines the opportunity to get out, mingle and experience something new."

This event was the first of its kind to be held aboard base, said Laserna. In the future MCCA hopes to coordinate similar events and continue to provide a variety of activities for Combat Center patrons.

"MCCA supports the Marine Corps," Laserna said. "Events like this are our way of showing support and we always want to provide recreational activities for the Marines, sailors and their families."



Matt Buyten, motocross rider, Metal Mulisha Moto Team, prepares to perform a stunt during the Motocross Jam Fest at a temporary dirt track between Dunham Street and 13th Street aboard the Combat Center, March 7.



Motorcyclists ride through a designated stunt course during the Motocross Jam Fest at a temporary dirt track between Dunham Street and 13th Street aboard the Combat Center, March 7.

Liberty Call



Combat Center Events

The Education Center will be offering free SAT preparation from Feb. 1 to March 22 in bldg. 1524. The course topics that will be focused on are math, writing and critical reading. The course's objective is to increase test scores, introduce test-taking strategies, and connect students with others who are taking the SAT and many more. For more information call 760-830-6881.

The Officer's Club is scheduled to host a Saint Patrick's Day celebration. The event begins at 7:00 p.m. and will feature Irish Dance, a bagpiper, and live music. All hands 21 and older welcome. For more information, call Teresa Simmons at 702-466-5991 or visit www.osc29Palms.com

The Wood Hobby Shop provides low-cost laser engraving services to imprint unique messages and designs onto almost any surface. Patrons can also purchase woodworking supplies and lumber to build or repair your own woodwork, craft and hobby items. Patrons using the woodworking machinery are required to attend a free safety class first. For more information contact 760-830-7214.

The Paintball Park aboard base is open Friday through Sunday for individuals and private groups. Private groups can rent this facility Monday through Thursday. You can bring your own equipment or rent it on site. It's a day of fun for the whole family! For more information, visit www.ThePaintBallPark.com or call 866-985-4932.

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 760-830-422.

Sunset Cinema

Friday, March 13

6:00 p.m.- Black or White, PG-13
8:30 p.m.- Project Almanac, PG-13
11:00 p.m.- Jupiter Ascending, PG-13

Saturday, March 14

10:30 a.m.- Chicken Run, G
12:30 p.m.- The SpongeBob Movie: Sponge Out Of Water (3-D), PG
3:00 p.m.- Jupiter Ascending (3-D), PG-13
6:00 p.m.- Seventh Son (3-D), PG-13
8:30 p.m.- Selma, PG-13
11:30 p.m.- The Boy Next Door, R

Sunday, March 15

12:30 p.m.- The SpongeBob Movie: Sponge Out Of Water, PG
2:30 p.m.- Project Almanac, PG-13
5:00 p.m.- McFarland, USA, PG
8:00 p.m.- Hot Tub Time Machine 2, R

Monday, March 16

6:30 p.m.- Seventh Son, PG-13

Tuesday, March 17

6:30 p.m.- Jupiter Ascending, PG-13

Wednesday, March 18

6:30 p.m.- McFarland, USA, PG

Thursday, March 19

5:00 p.m.- Selma, PG-13
7:30 p.m.- The Boy Next Door, R

Friday, March 20

4:30 p.m.- Big Hero 6, PG
7:00 p.m.- Black or White, PG-13
9:30 p.m.- Project Almanac, PG-13



Running to Inspire

Kevin Costner is perfectly cast coach in uplifting true-life sports tale

NEIL POND

'McFarland, USA'
Starring Kevin Costner,
Maria Bello
& Carlos Pratts
Directed by Niki Caro
Rated PG

When the folks at Disney were looking for someone to play the coach in this real-life sports drama, they knew who'd be perfect.

Kevin Costner, who turned 61 on Feb. 18, has been in just about every kind of movie, but he's become a sort of senior statesman of sports flicks, with a career arc that started in the 1980s with baseball (Bull Durham and Field of Dreams) and continued through the '90s with Tin Cup (golf) and

into last year with Draft Day (football).

In McFarland, USA he plays Jim White, a high school football coach who—like Costner—has been around the block a few times. White doesn't have a lot of patience with pampered jock-star players who don't put their hearts, as well as their shoulders, on the line and into the game. An "incident" at the beginning of the movie—in 1987—finds the coach, his wife and their two kids on the move, again, transferred from Boise, Idaho, to the small central California town of McFarland, where he quickly discovers that the mostly Hispanic football team is a flop—but man, can those boys run.

That's because they're

always running home from school to help their parents, or running after school to work in the fields. White sees their potential as a cross-country running team that could compete with bigger, better-funded schools—and possibly even compete at the state level. Never mind that the school has never had a running team, or that White has never coached one.

It's a pretty basic underdog-tale movie template, but several things about McFarland, USA make it a standout. For starters, director Niki Caro (whose three previous other features include Whale Rider and North Country, both of which received Oscar nods) never cloaks Costner in the glow of a "white savior" spotlight; he may be the star, but she makes sure the high school athletes shine. This "based-on-a-true-story" movie is their story, too, and the young actors cast as the runners, all newcomers and relative unknowns, give their onscreen characters personality, substance and dimension.

There's humor as well as heart as White and his family clash with, and ultimately embrace, their new culture. "You got burgers?" White asks on their

first—bumpy—night in town before settling for the local restaurant's only offering: tacos. Maria Bello does a solid job as Mrs. White, even though she's not given near enough to do, and Morgan Saylor, who played Dana Brody on TV's Homeland, is lovely as their teenage daughter, Julie, who falls for the running team's leader (Carlos Pratts).

We meet parents, neighbors, shopkeepers and other town residents. When the camera pans the crowd at the big state meet in the climactic final race scene, we realize that we—like coach White—have come to know, like and respect all these people, who were once unfamiliar, or even threatening.

As the credits roll, you'll get to meet the real stars of this story: the now-grown McFarland cross-country runners from the team, and the real Jim White. And if you don't walk out of this feel-good movie feeling better, more inspired and more uplifted than when you came in, proud of what happened back in this small California town in 1987 and proud of the boys and coach who made it possible...well, you must have seen a different movie than I did.

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