



The Marine Corps Drum and Bugle Corps of the Battle Color Detachment performs during a Battle Color Ceremony at Lance Cpl. Torrey L. Gray Field, Wednesday.

Combat Center hosts Battle Color Detachment

STORY AND PHOTOS BY
 LANCE CPL. LEVI SCHULTZ

The crowd of spectators swelled with anticipation as a formation of Marines, dressed in pristine blue dress uniforms and brandishing M1 Garand rifles, took the field. As the platoon commenced their unique precision drill routine, no verbal commands were necessary and only a cadence of acute clacks from the rifles broke their silence.

The Silent Drill Platoon, Marine Corps Drum and Bugle Corps, and the Official Marine Corps Color Guard comprise the Marine Corps Battle Color Detachment and performed during a Battle Color Ceremony at Lance Cpl. Torrey L. Gray Field March, Wednesday.

The detachment of more than 100 Marines travels worldwide to demonstrate several key traits of United States Marines, to include discipline, dedication and bearing.

"I really love seeing ceremonies like this because it epitomizes the Esprit de Corps and morale of our branch," said Cpl. Jamar Hodge, awards clerk, Installation Personnel Administration Center. "Being able to see them perform is a great

See **Battle Color** pg. A6



Maj. Gen. Lewis A. Craparotta, Combat Center Commanding General, salutes the national and Marine Corps colors carried by the Official Marine Corps Color Guard during a Battle Colors Ceremony at Lance Cpl. Torrey L. Gray Field, Wednesday.

'War Dogs' prepare families for upcoming deployment



Pfc. Braxton Peirce, radio operator, 2nd Battalion, 7th Marine Regiment, plays with his son Reminton, 6 months, before the units' pre-deployment brief at building 1707 aboard the Combat Center, March 2.

STORY AND PHOTOS BY
 CPL. THOMAS MUDD

The Marines, sailors and family members of 2nd Battalion, 7th Marine Regiment attended a pre-deployment brief held by the 2/7 Family Readiness Officer and battalion leadership at building 1707, March 2.

The FRO and the battalion leadership hold pre-deployment briefs to provide valuable information on the different base resources such as D-Stress and Families OverComing Under Stress to the family members of Marines and sailors.

"This brief is an important tool we use to pass valuable information to the families of the Marines," said Diane Durden, family readiness officer, 2/7. "We give the brief every time we are about to deploy because we often have new families and we want to make sure they know [as much

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Lieutenant William Daniel, chaplain, 2nd Battalion, 7th Marine Regiment, explains his role while the unit is deployed during a pre-deployment brief at building 1707 aboard the Combat Center, March 2.

Leadership takes first steps in fund drive



Lieutenant Cmdr. Michael Slaughter, chaplain, Combat Logistics Battalion 7, looks over documents regarding the Navy-Marine Corps Relief Society during the Active Duty Fund Drive Kickoff Breakfast at the Frontline Restaurant, Monday.

STORY AND PHOTOS BY CPL. THOMAS MUDD

Combat Center leadership from various units aboard the installation came together for the Active Duty Fund Drive Kickoff Breakfast at the Frontline Restaurant, Monday.

The Active Duty Fund Drive representatives held the breakfast to promote the goal 100 percent contact with all active duty personnel aboard the installation and explain to the leadership the importance of the fund drive and how it benefits the Navy-Marine Corps Relief Society.

The fund drive is used to gather money from active duty personnel to be used to help Marines and sailors who need assistance.

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 Lance Cpl. Devan Gowans.



Pfc. Bradley Brandes, a mortarman with Weapons Company, 1st Battalion, 4th Marines, fires an 81mm mortar system during the supporting arms coordination exercise portion of Exercise Iron Fist 2016 on San Clemente Island, Feb. 21.

WHAT I'VE LEARNED

Danielle CASCO

Range Control Floor Supervisor, Range Management Development Division

Casco is a Marine veteran and has worked for the Range Management Development Division for nearly 10 years. She has a love of animals, nature and her adopted elephant, Billie.



>I grew up in Albuquerque, N.M. with my brother and my mom. I joined the Marine Corps when I was 18-years-old after I graduated high school.

>I joined because I didn't want to go to college. I was raised with the mentality that you have to give back to your country in some way and be a productive member of society. I chose this branch because the Marine Corps had the extreme energy I was looking for.

>I liked everything about it. The camaraderie, the uniforms, the attitude. The Corps is better than the rest and it shows.

>I served for 5 years. I wanted to be an air traffic controller but I was placed in direct air support instead.

>My first duty station was Okinawa, Japan. I was there for two and a half years before I received orders to the Combat Center's Range Control Unit.

>One of the things that was really big for me while I was in was being a good leader. It was important to me because I received really good leadership from my [non-commissioned officers]. I made sure my Marines felt like they were being taken care of and that they weren't stretched too thin and that mentality stayed with me.

>Being a good leader means you're taking care of someone and they know they're being taken care of. It's important to have that.

>I think that was one of the hardest things for me to let go of when I got out. As a civilian, even if you do care about people you really have no effect on their life. Whereas in the military, you can care about them and help them

advance to the next level of their life.

>When I got out, I was gone for about 10 months and then my [officer in charge] called me to let me know about some job openings at Range Control. That's how I ended up back here.

>I help support the Combat Center because I'm part of a system that helps facilitate the training Marines conduct.

>My job is to be on the radio and make sure the ranges are available for units to use as well as ensure everything goes smoothly while training is being conducted.

>Working at Range Control I've learned a lot as a person, a leader and a follower.

>On my free time, I like to walk my dogs and feed my chickens. I also like rock climbing, seeing new places and just being outdoors in general.

>I appreciate the noise of the outdoors. Whether it's the wind blowing through the trees, the sounds the animals make, or the dirt moving under your feet. When you're outside there are no restrictions and it's always new. If you go somewhere one day then go to the same place the next day, it could be completely different.

>I've always been on the move. I'm not exactly settled because I always want to see more.

>I like listening to people because I enjoy hearing their stories. When you go to new places you meet different kinds of people.

>I'm a humanitarian and in my life I'm learning that being a humanitarian encompasses a lot of things. Anything that is new to me is interesting, anything someone thinks about is interesting

and if someone creates something I want to see it. I just like people and what they can do.

>I don't really have one person that I would credit my growth to, just a lot of people that I've spent a lot of time with. Over the years I've learned that if I put my mind to something I can get it done no matter what.

>My girlfriend, Shannon, has probably had the biggest influence on my personal life. She's helped me learn to reflect.

>I think my purpose is to be a caring person. I aspire to be happy and I hope that after I leave someone's life they leave feeling like they mean something, because they do.

>If I could give advice to someone it would be, you never have to settle because there's always a choice. That's been a huge life lesson for me and I don't think a lot of people realize that.

>Something I've carried with me from the Marine Corps is my drive. I've learned that no matter how nasty it gets, you have to keep going and that I can accomplish anything I put my mind to.

INTERVIEWED AND PHOTOGRAPHED BY CPL. MEDINA AYALA-LO

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MDLT, Combat Center organize cleanup

STORY BY LANCE CPL. LEVI SCHULTZ

When visiting Section 33, a 623-acre site, Morongo Basin residents and visitors can behold stretches of serene hiking trails and a natural habitat teeming with native plants and animals. Few would guess that the acreage was once used as illegal dumping ground and targeted for a 2,400-unit housing development.

Section 33, located just south of California Highway 62 between La Contenta Road and Joshua Tree Memorial Park, is scheduled for the fourth annual cleanup effort between Combat Center Marines and Morongo Basin community members, April 23 from 9:00 a.m. until noon. The land was purchased by the Mojave Desert Land Trust in conjunction with the Combat Center, The Trust for Public Land and the California Wildlife Conservation Board.

“Mojave Desert Land Trust works closely with

the base in projects that support flight and wild-life corridors,” said Danielle Segura, executive director, MDLT. “We celebrate the collaboration that made the cleanup of Section 33 a success with this Earth Day event every year.”

Volunteers from the Combat Center, MDLT, Armed Services YMCA, Morongo Basin Transit Authority as well as the local community will be contributing to the cleanup.

“It’s a basin-wide event,” said Kristina Becker, community liaison, Community Plans and Liaison Office. “Community members can come and work side-by-side with Marines and family members to do trail restoration and remove trash to help preserve this property for family and children to enjoy for years to come.”

According to Becker, the event has previously drawn more than 100 participants who pitched in by maintaining trails and removing trash and debris. “The base always wants to be an active part

of the community,” Becker said. “Through these events we afford Marines the opportunity to meet new people and learn about desert landscapes and conservation.”

The Department of Defense’s Readiness Environmental Protection Integration Program played a role in the installation’s participation in the event. According to <http://www.repi.mil/>, the program is a key tool for combating encroachment by protecting against land development that destroys or fragments an endangered species’ habitat and pushes those species onto less developed military lands, which in turn limits or restricts military training, testing and operations.

“I think it’s great that we can all come together to help preserve this land,” Segura said. “I feel that we have a really unique partnership with the base that works really well to support a healthy community.”

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Corporal Greg Terrazas provides notional security while his team executes a casualty evacuation during combat marksmanship training at Camp Pendleton, March 2. The training was part of the Urban Leaders Course taught by 1st Marine Division Schools, which focuses on enhancing small unit leadership through integrated training and implementation of fire teams and squad-sized elements in an urban setting.

STORY AND PHOTOS BY
SGT. EMMANUEL RAMOS

MARINE CORPS BASE CAMP PENDLETON, Calif. — Small unit leaders in the infantry are called upon to carry out orders and make decisions on the battlefield, and at times making the seemingly impossible possible. This is because of the rigorous training in their craft and the development of their leadership skills. It's that dedication that has been a hallmark of the Marine's ethos since the Corps' inception.

Ensuring the next generation of professional warfighters continues to maintain the standard of excellence, which has been established for more than 240 years, is a never ending mission for every Marine.

On March 2, Marines from collective infantry and non-infantry units conducted combat marksmanship training in urban terrain as part of an Urban Leaders Course presented by instructors with 1st Marine Division Schools at Camp Pendleton.

The course focuses on enhancing small unit leadership through integrated training and implementation of fire teams, and squad-sized elements, in an urban setting. Because of its close quarters, and numerous hiding positions an urban setting is one of the most dangerous areas Marines operate in. Here, Marines' physical and mental endurance is pushed to the limits.

"Not a lot of Marines have the opportunity to go through room clearings, specifically with live-fire," said Staff Sgt. David G. Agundez, chief instructor for Urban Leaders Course, 1st Marine Division Schools.

"Obviously we do have [simulation] training, but the more realistic aspect of having live-fire training is something that really helps [students] out."

The Marines are divided into two squads, each comprised of Marines with various infantry and non-infantry military occupational specialties. During the three-week course, Marines are expected to fill every role of a fire team.

This allows Marines to get a better appreciation and understanding of how the team's success depends on everyone doing their job.

"When these Marines go back to their units, they will be the subject matter experts on how to operate in urban terrain," said Agundez. "The only way to ensure we are sending them back fully trained is to have them know every role, so when the time comes they know how to employ their Marines."

During the room clearing portion of the training, Marines rehearsed different techniques that can be used to clear structures. While Marines executed their task, instructors assessed the teams with emphasis on the leader's actions.

"A lot of Marines, they pause, they hold, and they freeze. Ultimately, that's something that is really bad because in this type of environment in the real world anything can be thrown at you," said Agundez. "When you commit to a house, or a building, whatever the situation is, you have to go full-on knowing that it's not about just me; it's about the Marines to the left and right of me."

To make sure the lessons were learned from mistakes made, Marines were penalized by having to conduct a casualty evacuation. This meant having to fireman carry the casualty more than 300 yards; a task that left everyone in the squad gasping for air.

"It was one of the more challenging aspects of the course, but it worked," said Lance Cpl. Parker Chase, a rifleman with 2nd Battalion, 5th Marine Regiment. "I'll remember to fix my mistakes on the next run because I don't want to do that again."

After a long day of rehearsals, the fruits of the students' labor began to show, as fewer mistakes were made, and better execution was praised by instructors.

"Every unit can't afford to send all their Marines to this course, so these Marines become a huge asset for their units because they can pass this knowledge and training on," said Agundez.

The course begins its final days of training next week. During this time, the pressure will intensify as Marines' understanding of military operations in urban terrain will be tested in a larger combat town. If successful, these Marines will return to their units better trained and stronger leaders.



Marines execute a casualty evacuation drill during combat marksmanship training at Camp Pendleton, March 2.



Lance Cpl. Roger Freckleton gets into position as the point man for his fire team during combat marksmanship training at Camp Pendleton, March 2.

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Battle Color from pg. A1

opportunity because it shows the level of discipline a Marine can reach.”

The Drum and Bugle Corps, also known as ‘The Commandant’s Own,’ began the ceremony with selections composed by Italian composer and musicologist, Ottorino Respighi, accompanied by complex and precise formation movements.

“I think it’s a great experience,” said Marisa McDonald, military spouse. “I home school my seven-year-olds so it’s really cool for them to be able to see this side of the Marine Corps and then get up close and interact with the Marines.”

For the climax of the ceremony, the Marine Corps Color Guard presented the battle colors adorned with streamers and silver bands, which symbolize the 54 military campaigns and more than 400 battles

in which the Marine Corps has played a role throughout history. The ceremony concluded with the Marines of the detachment remaining on the field to greet those in attendance.

“I love coming out, talking with the people and being able to represent a positive image for the Marine Corps,” said Lance Cpl. Megan Almojuela, soprano bugler, Marine Corps Drum and Bugle Corps. “It’s great to show people something fantastic that they may only get one chance to see in their lives.”

The Marines with the Battle Color Detachment are scheduled to continue their tour and will move on to Marine Corps Base Camp Pendleton, Marine Corps Air Station Yuma and Marine Corps Recruit Depot San Diego in the days to come.



The Official Marine Corps Color Guard of the Battle Color Detachment presents the national colors during the playing of the national anthem as part of a Battle Color Ceremony at Lance Cpl. Torrey L. Gray Field, Wednesday.



A Marine with U.S. Marine Drum and Bugle Corps, also known as “The Commandant’s Own,” performs during a Battle Color Ceremony at Lance Cpl. Torrey L. Gray Field, Wednesday.

War Dogs from pg. A1

as possible]. The more seasoned families also learn about new resources.”

The families were given information on different programs that are available at the Combat Center that can help alleviate any problems before the unit deploys.

“The tools that we give these families help them deal with having their spouses gone for such a long time,” Durden said. “Having people to rely-on in times like these is one of the most important resources that we can provide these families, and these briefs give them that resource.”

The brief gave the battalion’s commanding officer the opportunity to address the battalion’s family members and inform them about what training the battalion will be doing in the weeks ahead.

“The Marines are 99 percent ready for this deployment,” said Lt. Col. Christopher Steele, commanding officer, 2/7. “I am going to make sure that we are completely ready for anything. We want all the families of the battalion to know why their Marines are training so often while we are approaching a deployment, and give them some insight on what their Marines will be doing while they are deployed.”



Diane Durden, family readiness officer, 2nd Battalion, 7th Marine Regiment, talks to Marines, sailors and family members during a pre-deployment brief for the battalion at building 1707 aboard the Combat Center, March 2.



Lt. Col. Christopher Steele, commanding officer, 2nd Battalion, 7th Marine Regiment, talks to the Marines, sailors and their families about the importance of being prepared during the units’ pre-deployment brief at building 1707 aboard the Combat Center, March 2.

TOUGH MINDED OPTIMISM

by Lou Gerhardt



I want to re-introduce to you Tom Reddinger who faithfully delivers us our Los Angeles Times 365 days a year without ever slipping up on the job. We not only get our newspaper early every morning but Tom always drops it right at my garage door so that when I open the door it is right at my feet. This requires care and effort on Tom’s part because our house is quite a ways up our driveway from the street.

I have talked to Tom several times since he started delivering our Los Angeles Times. He is a truly dedicated servant of his customers. He delivers all over Twentynine Palms and he also distributes the Wall Street Journal, the New York Times, the Desert Sun, the San Bernardino Sun, USA Today and the Bloomberg Businessweek.

Tom is accompanied every morning by his loyal dog Shebah. She has been his beloved companion for the past 12 years. Tom is my kind of guy. He is a hard working, tough minded optimist.

Some words of John W. Gardner, former U.S. Secretary of Commerce come to mind:

“An excellent plumber is infinitely more admirable than an incompetent philosopher. The society that scorns excellence in plumbing because plumbing is a humble activity, and tolerates shoddiness in philosophy because philosophy is an exalted activity, will have neither good plumbing nor good philosophy. Neither its pipes nor its theories will hold water.”

This column sponsored by:

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Marines bring the fight in close



Marines of Company A, 1st Reconnaissance Battalion, conducts target recognition and engagement through a simulated door way during the close quarter marksmanship portion of Close Quarter Battle training aboard Marine Corps Base Camp Pendleton, Calif., Tuesday. The training focused on room clearing procedures along with close quarter marksmanship in a series of challenging drills.

STORY AND PHOTOS BY
LANCE CPL. TIMOTHY VALERO

The calm of the room was broken as a pair of Marines entered with rifles at the ready. One Marine spotted an insurgent hiding in the room. "Put your hands up. Put your hands up," yelled the Marine. The startled insurgent, with little hesitation, raised his hands high in the air. A Marine moved quickly to detain and search him as a fellow Marine stood guard. "Well done, well done," said an instructor as he walked into the room, "let's reset for the next team."

Marines of Company A, 1st

Reconnaissance Battalion, 1st Marine Division, honed their skills in a Close Quarter Battle team trainer aboard Marine Corps Base Camp Pendleton, Calif., Tuesday.

The training focused on room clearing techniques and close quarter marksmanship training with the M4 carbine and the M45A1 close quarters battle pistol in a series of fire-and-maneuver drills.

After completing some familiarization and remediation, the Marines furthered their knowledge and developed their skills by working with the Expeditionary Operations Training Group, which provides training in select



Marines of Company A, 1st Reconnaissance Battalion, observe fellow Marines conducting close quarter marksmanship drills during Close Quarter Battle training aboard Marine Corps Base Camp Pendleton, Calif., Tuesday.



A pair of Marines with Company A, 1st Reconnaissance Battalion, prepare to clear a room during Close Quarter Battle training aboard Marine Corps Base Camp Pendleton, Calif., Tuesday.

special skills and conducts and evaluates collective training in order to prepare units prior to deployment.

"We teach Marines everything they need to know about conducting close quarter tactics, reconnaissance and urban sharp shooting," said Gunnery Sgt. Michael Wilkinson, an EOTG instructor.

Following the EOTG training, the Marines worked through realistic urban training, and concluded with a maritime interoperability training exercise. Those packages provide the Marines a common set of skills they can use to work with other components of the U.S. Armed Forces, as well as other maritime partners.

"Once [the Marines] have completed and pass the maritime interoperability training portion of the exercise they are then certified and ready for deployment with [Marine Expeditionary Units]," Wilkinson said.

The training the Marines received to become ready for a deployment is crucial to their readiness and offers MEUs an additional capability.

"The MEU commanders will have the option to employ a precision raid force when needed," said Wilkinson.

The Marines of 1st Reconnaissance stand ever ready to answer the call to duty, swiftly and silently.

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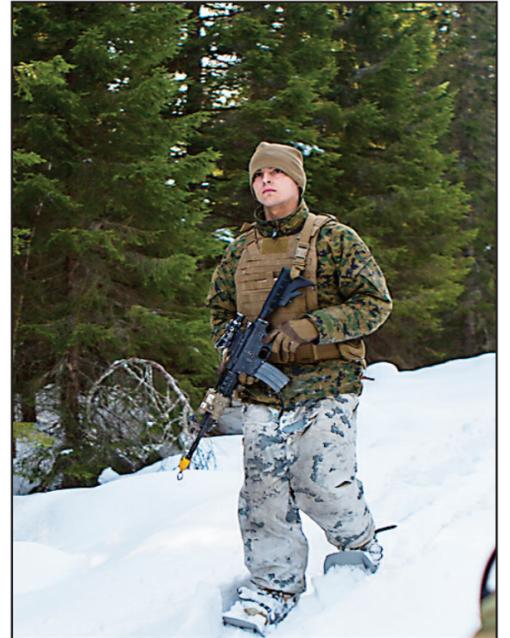
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WeekINPhotos

No Rest for the Wicked 1/8



Marines with Combined Arms Company, 1st Battalion, 8th Marine Regiment, set up a defense position during Exercise Cold Response 16 at Spravo, Norway, Sunday. The climate and environment of Norway challenges the integration of air, land, and sea capabilities from 13 NATO allies and partners while improving their collective capacity to respond and operate as a team.

Marines with Combined Arms Company, 1st Battalion, 8th Marine Regiment, conduct dismounted patrols during Exercise Cold Response 16 at Spravo, Norway, Sunday.



U.S. Marines with Combined Arms Company, 1st Battalion, 8th Marine Regiment, set up a defense position during Exercise Cold Response 16 at Spravo, Norway, Sunday.

U.S. Marines with Combined Arms Company, 1st Battalion, 8th Marine Regiment, set up a defense position during Exercise Cold Response 16 at Spravo, Norway, Sunday.

[Photos by Cpl. Rebecca Floto]

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Exercise Iron Fist 2016 - *One Marine's Perspective*



PHOTO BY LANCE CPL. DEVAN GOWANS

Pfc. Bradley Brandes, a mortarman with Weapons Company, 1st Battalion, 4th Marines, fires an 81mm mortar system during the supporting arms coordination exercise portion of Exercise Iron Fist 2016 on San Clemente Island, Feb. 21.

STORY BY CPL. SHALTIEL DOMINGUEZ

I awoke inside my coffin rack to the sounds of bottles and other small items clanking on metal surfaces as the USS Somerset rocked back and forth amid violent waves. I checked my phone to look at the time. 0400. Damn. I still had an hour before work. I opened up an electronic book I was reading the night before; Haruki Murakami's "South of the Border, West of the Sun." After swiping through the pages, I saw a quote I had highlighted a while ago:

"What we needed were not words or promises, but the steady accumulation of small realities."

The quote referred to building a relationship between two people. However, I felt it also applied to relationships between organizations and it summarized our mission here as interpreters and liaisons. We were responsible for breaking down language and cultural barriers between the United States Marine Corps and Japan's Western Army Infantry Regiment. But more than that we made sure they received the training and knowledge necessary to build a long-term relationship. It was our job to facilitate a steady accumulation of small realities.

I lost myself in the book and soon enough it was sunrise. The Japanese will have already pre-staged their military personnel at the embarking ramp for loading onto the landing craft air cushion hovercraft, ready for their amphibious assault. I washed my face and wiped it dry with a Japanese handkerchief - my most precious keepsake; it was a gift from my mentor and I received it while I was studying for a year in Kobe, Japan. The handkerchief reminded me of the discipline and hard work that I respected so much in the Japanese culture. It seems the Japanese I'd met always do their best in every aspect of life.

It was time for me to do my best as well.

EMBARKATION

I met up with the other Marine interpreters on the flight deck. There were four of us total. First was Kaya, a half-Japanese, half-American girl from Utah, who spoke with a valley-girl accent in English, but whose Japanese was impeccable. Christopher was also half-Japanese, half-American, and had some of the best knowledge of Japanese technical terms. Finally, we had Aric, a California kid who had a solid basic foundation of Japanese and who could be counted on to provide supplies and other things we needed when we were over tasked. As the lead non-commissioned officer for the USS Somerset interpreter detachment, I was responsible for tasking each of them out and maintaining accountability.

We headed down the embarking ramp and put our ear plugs on as the deafening sounds of grinding machinery echoed from the belly of the ship, otherwise known as the well-deck. The well-deck was a massive metallic atrium flanked by several ramps from which multiple vehicles could board the hovercrafts and deploy into the water. Its walls were covered with pipes, chains and other metal components. Violent waves crashed and flooded into the main ramp and a couple of curious seals were brave enough to wander into it before being chased away by the sailors in charge of safety. They were worried the seals would be harmed when we launched.

The Japanese soldiers had already lined themselves up on the walls of one ramp. The combat cargo staff non-commissioned officer, a tough-as-nails woman named Staff Sgt. Jazmen Ruiz, gave me a roster of the Japanese soldiers' names and explained the embarking procedures to us.

The other embarking Marines were already hard at work using hand and arm signals to direct vehicles and ensure the safety of their Japanese soldiers. They made sure that the vehicles fit together in either the ship or the landing craft air cushion, similar to a game of Tetris.

"Time to add embarking specialist to my list of military occupational specialties," said Kaya, a Marine who by trade worked for the 7th Engineer Support Battalion.

What she said wasn't far from the truth. We really were required to have knowledge of multiple jobs when working as interpreters and liaisons. Interpretation is tricky, and it's difficult to translate and teach about something you don't fully understand yourself. Furthermore, each word and sentence has subtle connotations and nuances. It's extremely important to not only know the subject, but also the culture of the group of people you are talking to if you want to effectively communicate with them. We owed a lot



PHOTO BY LANCE CPL. DEVAN GOWANS

Soldiers with Western Army Infantry Regiment, Japan Ground Self-Defense Force, observe naval gunfire from the USS Spruance during a supporting arms coordination center exercise at San Clemente Island, as part of Exercise Iron Fist 2016, Feb. 22.

to Ruiz who was a good teacher herself. She ran us through multiple drills and rehearsals until we were comfortable in the role.

I performed the roll-call and directed the Japanese to each station. I also walked them through embarking procedures prior to them loading up their vehicles and boarding the landing craft air cushion. Kaya went up to the tower and was broadcasting boarding and staging announcements. Christopher was attached to the Japanese landing force and was already lined up with them. We made sure that if the Japanese leadership had questions about the procedures, we provided answers to them or we directed them to the proper subject matter expert.

After the hustle and bustle, 1st Lt. Jacob Greenslade, the officer-in-charge of the embarkation and I got the idea to grab breakfast for the Japanese soldiers. Having staged two-hours prior to the launch and due to the high operational tempo, we knew the Japanese wouldn't have had time to eat breakfast at all. I took Aric with me and went up to the galley where we talked to the lead petty officer who, after some wheeling and dealing, was more than happy to provide us with enough boxes of Poptarts, cereals and fruits.

While Aric distributed the food, I recognized a sleepy face in a Japanese military vehicle, a militarized version of the Toyota Mega Cruiser. It was Mas, a staff sergeant with the Japanese Army and the platoon sergeant of their Fire Support Team. I had been working with him for two years when I was attached to the 1st Air Naval Gunfire Liaison Company. A real modern-day samurai, he was proficient in conducting call-for-fire, whether it was artillery, mortars, naval guns or even close air support. I opened up a pack of Poptarts and said hi.

"Been a while man," I said to him in Japanese, grinning. I handed him a Poptart which he happily received. He then got out of his vehicle and distributed the food to his guys.

"Thanks," said Mas. "This'll help out a lot. It's good to see you again."

"No problem. You guys got enough water?"

He smiled and showed me his canteen.

"Awesome. Let's grab some coffee and play some Japanese poker when you guys get back."

"Sounds like a plan," he said. He and his troops looked a lot less sleepy as they ate.

STRATEGIC CORPORAL

It was nearly 10 a.m. by the time the last of the landing force embarked and our day had just begun. The day before, I organized a gear class for the Japanese landing force officer and his staff taught by Cpl. Simmons, an infantry platoon sergeant with Bravo Company, 4th Battalion, 1st Marine Regiment. Simmons was an example of what retired Gen. Charles Krulak defined as the strategic corporal: knowledgeable about his job field and physically strong. Although Simmons was rough around the edges, he spoke clearly and with intent. Simmons also wanted to build a relationship with the Japanese and he understood that the decisions he makes at his level can have a significant impact on the mission.

The Japanese soldiers were more than happy to receive knowledge from the experienced Marine grunts on how to improve their mobility and combat effec-

tiveness by properly configuring their gear. Simmons and his Marines showed the different configurations of their packs, depending on personal preference, which weapons they needed to carry and their experiences in the field.

Simmons and his platoon had interacted with the Japanese before at the Combat Center. A few of his Marines even sparred with one of the Japanese soldiers who happened to be a Judo Black Belt. Simmons kept an open mind about what the Japanese had to teach and his Marines were more than happy to step up and teach too. They each used hand gestures and body language to communicate in addition to their words.

"It's all about personal preference and comfort," said Simmons as he loosened the straps on his pack, allowing the hip strap to settle on his lower back, beneath his plate carrier. "Each ounce of pain compounds itself when you're patrolling."

Due to the success of the class, we got ambitious and tried to plan and execute an informal small unit tactics class to be held that afternoon during some downtime. We had gotten permission from the Marine first sergeant and were pretty excited for it.

Until then Kaya, Aric and I kept ourselves gainfully employed, resolving any logistical, planning and operational issues that came up and functioned as the intermediary between the staff of the USS Somerset and the Western Army Infantry Regiment's landing force staff. Such tasks included resolving any issues that the Japanese landing force commander had about transportation and communication for the amphibious landing exercise, being the middleman for media content between the Japanese staff and Marine Corps public affairs and conducting physical training with both the Japanese soldiers and the Marines.

It was early afternoon and nearly time for the small unit tactics class. The Japanese had gathered an entire platoon at the flight deck to participate. I looked for Simmons and he was nowhere to be found. I found out that he was ordered to conduct rehearsals and construct terrain models for their amphibious landing and assault. Now, any Marine who has been in the Corps longer than 30 minutes knows that plans change all of the time, but I was worried about how the Japanese soldiers would react to the sudden change of plans.

There are many ways to apologize in Japanese, and I used the most formal expression: "Moushiwake arimasen", which meant I made a mistake and that I had no excuse. The lesson was canceled. Their officer-in-charge released them back to their regular tasks.

"Hey, no big deal. This happens in the Japanese military too. Plans change," said Yuya, a Japanese Army ranger who I had went to the gym with before. It came as a welcome relief that the Japanese were also used to abrupt changes in plans.

"Yeah, that's the military isn't it?" I scratched my head and laughed at myself. We then sat at the flight deck for a while and relaxed for a bit. There would be another chance to teach.

SMALL REALITIES

After dinner, I visited the command center in the bridge and made sure there were no additional interpreting tasks required from us. I then went back to the sleeping quarters, sat on my coffin rack and opened up the Murakami book.

As I started to doze off, I heard somebody call my name. It was a Japanese officer we nicknamed Slick, for his long hair which was gelled back and his incredible English-speaking skills. I got out of my coffin rack and suited up. His superiors tasked him with getting some of the video footage from Marine Corps Public Affairs and he didn't know how to reach them. Sounded like a job for me.

Ultimately, we were there as interpreters and liaisons to break down the language barrier, and offer Marines a way to communicate with, understand and navigate the differences in culture of the foreign military we were working with.

More than that, I believed we were facilitators, being the intermediary between the higher level commands of both sides, we were the first to know what needed to get done, and thus, it was also our job to make sure it got done.

It was our job not only to convey words or promises, but to provide the steady accumulation of small realities.

I put my boots and my blouse on and got to work.

Liberty Call



Combat Center Events

Marine Corps Community Services is hosting a Motocross Jam Fest, March 12 from 12 to 4 p.m. Enjoy some entertainment with DJ Angie Vee and Emcee Kenny Bell. There will be food and beer concessions available. The event is open to all hands. For more information call 760-830-5086.

An **Education and Career Fair** is scheduled for March 23 at the West Gym from 9:30 a.m. to 1 p.m. The event is open to all hands and business dress or uniform of the day is suggested. For more information call 760-830-7225

Hashmarks Staff Non-commissioned Officer Club hosts steak night open to all hands Mondays from 4:30p.m. to 8 p.m. and SNCOs only on Fridays. For more information call 760-830-5035.

Sunset Cinema

Friday, March 11

5:00 p.m. – Kung Fu Panda 3, PG
7:30 p.m. – The Finest Hours, PG-13
10:00 p.m. – Deadpool, R

Saturday, March 12

12:00 p.m. – Kung Fu Panda 3 (3-D), PG
2:30 p.m. – The 5th Wave, PG-13
5:00 p.m. – Dirty Grandpa, R
7:30 p.m. – Zoolander 2, PG-13
10:00 p.m. – How to be Single, R

Sunday, March 13

12:00 p.m. – The Finest Hours, PG-13
2:30 p.m. – Zoolander 2, PG-13
5:00 p.m. – How to be Single, R
7:30 p.m. – Deadpool, R

Monday, March 14

7:00 p.m. – The Choice, PG-13

Tuesday, March 15

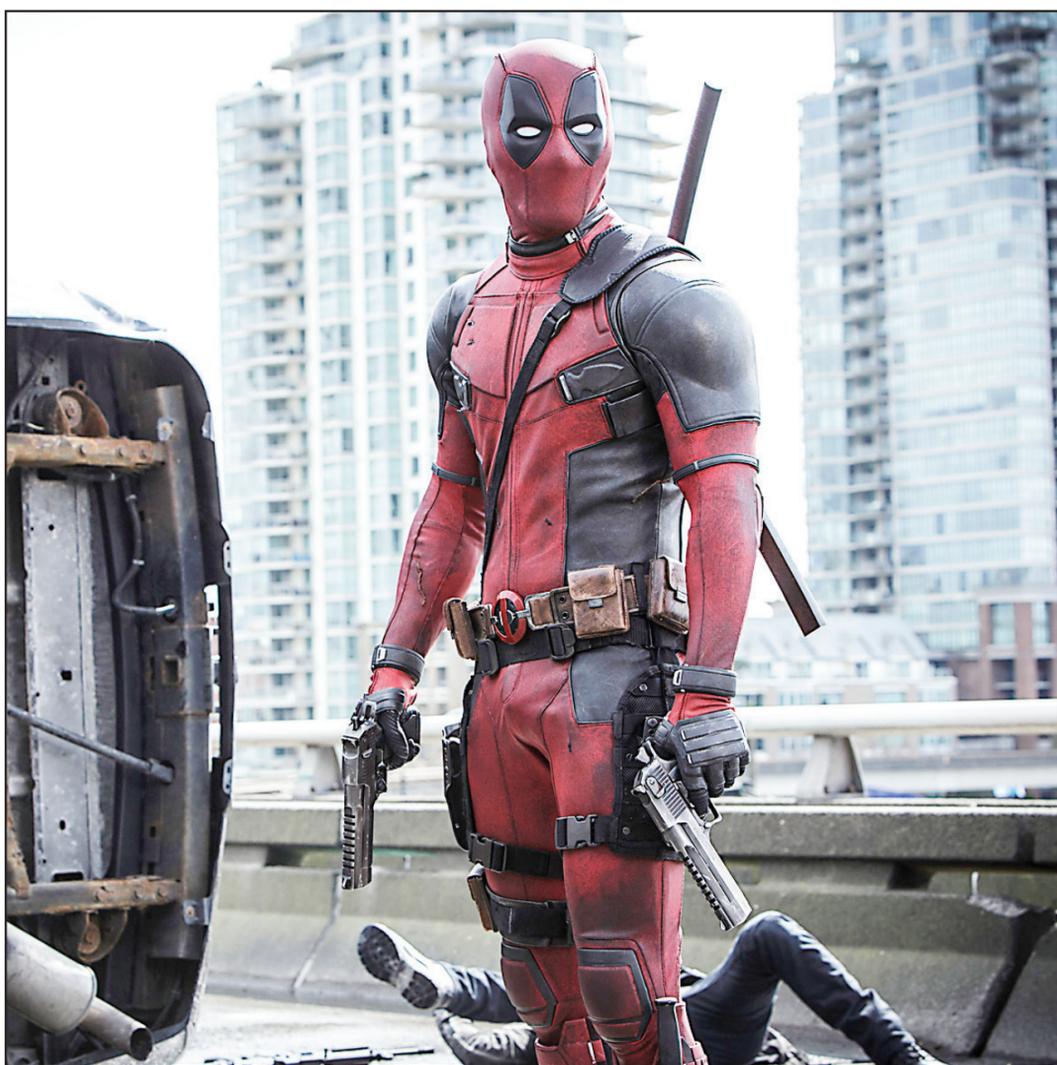
7:00 p.m. – Deadpool, R

Wednesday, March 16

5:00 p.m. – Kung Fu Panda 3, PG
7:00 p.m. – Hail Caesar!, PG-13

Thursday, March 17

5:00 p.m. – The 5th Wave, PG-13
7:30 p.m. – Dirty Grandpa, R



Super Raunchy

Marvel's new superhero is fast, funny—and definitely not for kids

NEIL POND

'Deadpool'
Starring **Ryan Reynolds and Morena Baccarin**
Directed by **Tim Miller**
Rated **R**

For the past few years, there's been some major comic-book movie buzz about one of the minor characters on the superhero-spandex spectrum.

Deadpool, a latecomer Marvel Comics anti-hero introduced onscreen in X-Men Origins: Wolverine (2009), had actually been making appearances in comic books since the early 1990s, later appearing in videogames, TV cartoons and in a line of promotional toy figures.

Originally a mentally unstable, mutated villain, he reforms a bit, morphing into more of a motor-mouthed, smack-talking, skull-cracking vigilante, for his first feature film.

Returning to the role after the X-men flick, Ryan Reynolds rips into the part with something-to-prove gusto—namely, that he can, indeed, headline a comic-book movie that doesn't stink. The funky jade juju of The Green Lantern had been following him around since 2011, and he addresses it head-on—and crushes it—in the hilarious, snarky opening credits...and a couple of times later, too, just for good measure. The smart, razor-sharp script, from Zombieland scribes Rhett Reese and Paul Wernick, is a nonstop comic spray of R-rated barbs, f-bomb zingers, sarcastic spatter and wide-ranging pop-cultural riff-ery that often lampoons even itself.

This is clearly not your comic-book movie of

yesteryear, or even yesterday, and Deadpool is no clean-cut Captain America. "I may be super, but I'm no hero," he tells us in an opening scene, an extended, operatic clash in which he lays into an armada of bad guys like a psychopathic Spider-Man on speed, quipping nonstop as decapitated heads fly, brains splatter, bones snap and bodies are sliced, diced and impaled on his twin samurai swords like pieces of juicy kabob meat.

Deadpool (his name comes from a wager about who'd be the first to die) isn't afraid of getting injured. Torturous laboratory experiments that left Wade Wilson, his real-life alter ego, hideously scarred and disfigured also gave him the "superpower" of cellular regeneration. That means when a body part gets shot through, smashed, hacked off, stabbed, incinerated or blown to bits, he just has to give it a little time—it'll grow back.

Of course, the movie has an obligatory cameo by Marvel's founder, Stan Lee. Groundbreaking 1960s-'70s singer-actress Leslie Uggams appears as Blind Al, Deadpool's sightless roommate. Fanboys will be delighted to see lovely Morena Baccarin, from TV's Gotham, The Flash and Homeland as Wade's beautiful girlfriend Vanessa, who helps give the story a thumping romantic heart. And stay until the credits are over for one parting bon mot, a movie postscript that—unlike other Marvel outings—looks not to the future but instead to the past, to another memorable movie afterward.

Randy, raw and gleefully gritty, nastier, bloodier, more violent and riotously raunchier than any Marvel movie ever, Deadpool is just what a lot of fans have been waiting for—especially if they've been waiting for a "superhero" who swears, farts, babbles, jokes, listens to Wham!, loves unicorns, enjoys rough sex...and sure seems to get into his job a lot more than Thor, Batman or Superman ever did.

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Palms Youth Club is hiring for part time program leaders for the after school and summer programs. Positions are for 0-15 hours per week @ \$10 per hour. NO PHONE CALLS WILL BE ACCEPTED, applications can be picked up starting Thurs. March 10th and must be turned in by March 25th at 6:00 pm. Requirements: Pass Instructional Aide test with MUSD, Fingerprinted and pass background check, TB test, HS Diploma, 1 year working with school aged children. Must be task oriented, organized, responsible, professional, and resourceful with strong oral and written communication skills. PLEASE SERIOUS INQUIRES ONLY: APPLY AT 5882 LUCKIE AVE 29 PALMS CA 92277

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Marine Corps leaders discuss current, future challenges



Commandant of the Marine Corps Gen. Robert B. Neller, speaks on the Marine Corps' current operational tempo, while Vice Commandant of the Coast Guard Vice Adm. Charles D. Michel, Chief of Naval Operations Adm. John M. Richardson, and retired Adm. James Stavridis, listen during the WEST 2016 Conference at the San Diego Convention Center, Feb. 17. The purpose of the conference was for service members to come together and discuss strategic military concepts and training, as well as meet with companies that can assist in making their concepts a reality.



Lt. Gen. David H. Berger discusses command and control and distributed operations during the WEST 2016 Conference at the San Diego Convention Center, Feb. 17.

STORY AND PHOTOS BY
SGT. EMMANUEL RAMOS

SAN DIEGO - The Marine Corps is the nation's premier expeditionary force. It responds to global crises and defends America's interests abroad in an ever changing environment. To ensure this force-in-readiness, senior officials use a realistic evaluation of worldwide threats to make recommendations that influence policy, and design extensive training.

On Feb. 17, Lt. Gen. David H. Berger, the commanding general of I Marine Expeditionary Force, participated in a panel discussion at the WEST 2016 naval conference, hosted by U.S. Naval Institute and AFCEA, that addressed his strategy for the implementation of the new guidance laid out by Commandant of the Marine Corps Gen. Robert B. Neller earlier this year.

The purpose of the conference was for service members to come together

and discuss strategic military concepts and training, as well as meet with companies that can assist in making their concepts a reality.

Berger opened up the panel by listing his observations on command and control, and distributed operations in the Marine Corps with an emphasis on I MEF operations.

"Our operating concept in the Marine Corps right now is Expeditionary Force 21, which drives us towards distributed operations," Berger said during his opening remarks. "In the offense it allows us to spread out, find seams or create seams, and then penetrate quickly. In the defense it spreads us out and it makes targeting a little more of a challenge for the threat."

Berger acknowledged that with distributed operations there are potential weaknesses, and as technology advances, cyber warfare is the biggest threat.

"I think there is no question in our

mind the adversary that we train against will degrade, or shut down, our networks for some period of time, or even more insidious get inside them and cause problems while they're up," Berger said.

To combat those threats, Berger stressed the importance of having small unit leadership that can make decisions and operate without a higher headquarters for extended periods of time. In addition to small unit leadership, having a network environment that Marines can have command and control nodes, that can self-isolate and self-heal, is necessary to operate successfully against potential threats.

"We need to be able to go extended periods of time with no communications between levels of commands, and by extended I mean up to a week. All that means for us is enabling, empowering small unit leaders to make decisions on their own when we can't talk to them," Berger said.

During the panel Berger also spoke on how upgrades to the entire amphibious fleet, in combination with the new F-35B Lightning II aircraft, allows leaders to command and control a credible mobile force over a wider area.

"Before, we could never have commanded or controlled a force like that, distributed like that, over that great a distance," Berger said.

This capability allows the Navy and Marine Corps to spread itself farther apart throughout the Pacific and around the world, while reducing the risk. This also allows them to build more relationships with foreign nations.

On the final day of the of the conference, Neller, along with the Vice Commandant of the Coast Guard, Vice Adm. Charles D. Michel, and Chief of Naval Operations, Adm. John M. Richardson, gathered for a town hall to discuss how their strategy is being implemented.

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