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FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

CONTINUED DESERT TORTOISE TRANSLOCATION

MARINE CORPS AIR GROUND COMBAT CENTER TWENTYNINE PALMS, Calif. – The Combat Center began and completed the second phase of their desert tortoise translocation effort Oct. 2 through Oct. 4. The translocation, conducted in accordance with a United States Fish and Wildlife Service-signed biological opinion, serves as negotiated mitigation to support a congressionally mandated land expansion, which will afford the Marine Corps the ability to conduct Large Scale Exercise training of a Marine expeditionary brigade-level force.

During the second phase of the translocation process Natural Resources and Environmental Affairs located, performed thorough health assessments, hydrated, and carefully translocated 114 tortoises to new homes. The release site for each tortoise was individually selected based on habitat factors, and to maintain social connections with its existing neighbors.

In December 2013, the National Defense Authorization Act of 2014 was signed into law, changing management responsibility of designated land from the Bureau of Land Management to the Department of Defense. A segment of desert tortoise population within this newly-acquired training land had been identified for translocation in order to sustain their survivability

in accordance with the Final Environmental Impact Statement and supporting the United States Fish and Wildlife Service-signed Biological Opinion. Following the completion of translocation, the Combat Center's Natural Resources and Environmental Affairs staff will conduct a subsequent 30-year study of the threatened species to support the tortoise recovery goals set out in the BO.

The Marine Corps worked carefully with the United States Fish and Wildlife Service and Bureau of Land Management to craft a desert tortoise translocation plan calculated to assure the maximum survival of relocated tortoises. The Marine Corps will intensely monitor tortoises for the first five years after translocation, with monitoring requirements reducing over time out to the full 30-year obligation in accordance with the BO and FEIS.