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Twentynine Palms, Calif.

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OBSERVATION POST



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THIS ISSUE

A3 - Heat Conditions
A4 - Domestic violence
A8 - 3rd LAR

HOT TOPICS



As a result of the activities Sunday, the Military Officers Association of America meeting has been cancelled.

2006 HEAT CONDITION FLAG WARNING SYSTEM BEGINS

Summer is coming. MCAGCC's Heat Condition Flag Warning System will start effective May 1st. It is a leader's responsibility to be aware of heat conditions and to take steps to prevent heat casualties. All organizations on base that are responsible for informing subordinate units must be aware of the current flag condition and ensure the information is distributed as appropriate. Leaders should review CCO 6200.3C for information concerning prevention of heat casualties, first aid for casualties and the flag condition warning system. The G-3 point of contact for the warning system is Staff Sgt. Hibbert. He can be reached at 830-6662.

APRIL IS NATIONAL SEXUAL ASSAULT AWARENESS MONTH

Sexual Assault Prevention Begins With You! The month of April is dedicated to making a concerted effort to raise awareness about and prevent sexual assaults. This year's theme, "Sexual Assault Prevention Begins With You," enlists the support of every Marine, Sailor and civilian to combat this pervasive problem. Sexual assault has no place in the Marine Corps and preventing it is every service member's responsibility.

COMING NEXT ISSUE

- Presidential visit
- 2/7 Memorial
- 20th Annual Ridge Run

THIS DAY IN MARINE CORPS HISTORY

April 21, 1951

Carrier-based Marine planes downed three Yaks in the first air-to-air contact of Marine air with the North Korean Air Force.

Close air support simulation virtually links Air Force, Combat Center Marines



CPL. BRIAN A. TUTHILL

Major Walt Yates demonstrates how to acquire a target during Virtual Joint Integration Training at the battle simulation center.

CPL. BRIAN A. TUTHILL
COMBAT CORRESPONDENT

Through a reticle, three enemy tanks are spotted. After calling in coordinates for close air support over the radio, an Air Force AC-130 gunship quickly closes.

BOOM! The first hit was off and barely missed the group. One tank turns toward the forward air controller's position.

"100 meters north!" the FAC says into his radio to adjust the falling bombs.

BOOM! The second hit is direct. BOOM! "Fire for effect," he says. Steel rains down from above, showering the targets until they are obliterated.

Although this fire mission is being performed in the confines of the simulation center and those enemy tanks were made of pixels instead of steel, Combat Center Marines from 3rd Battalion, 4th Marine Regiment; and 3rd Battalion, 2nd Marine Regiment, here for Mojave Viper; were able to hone their skills of calling for close air support Wednesday.

The exercise also digitally linked the Marines, who watched results of their calls on three eight-foot-tall screens in a black room, with an AC-130 gunship crew who were flying over the same terrain in a flight simulator at Hurlburt Field, Fla., while they carried out the fire missions.

"Virtual Joint Fires Integration Training, or V-JFIT, is a joint, distributed, virtual environment training exercise," said Maj. Walt Yates, modeling and simulations officer, G-3. "It brings together Marine

See SIMULATOR, A5

3/7 posts new battalion sergeant major

LANCE CPL. MICHAEL S. CIFUENTES
COMBAT CORRESPONDENT

Sergeant major of 3rd Battalion, 7th Marine Regiment, Sgt. Maj. Walter H. Kilgore, was relieved of his duty as battalion sergeant major by Sgt. Maj. Douglas L. Smith, in a relief and appointment ceremony April 13 held on the Combat Center Parade Field.

Smith, a Nashville, Tenn., native, was previously Kilo Company's first sergeant. He has been assigned to 3/7 since May 2005 and deployed with the battalion in September 2005 to Ar Ramadi, Iraq.

Smith entered the Marine Corps in September 1984 and graduated from Marine Corps Recruit Depot Parris Island, S.C. After basic training, Smith received training at the Marine Integrated Maintenance Management Course in Norfolk, Va. He was then assigned to Detachment B., 1st Force Service Support Group, Marine Corps Air Station El Toro, Calif.

Smith's military occupational specialty changed to machine gunner after serving as a Marine Security Guard while a corporal in 1986. His next duty station was with 2nd Battalion, 7th Marine Regiment, where he was assigned as the area advisor



Sgt. Maj. Walter H. Kilgore, outgoing sergeant major, and Sgt. Maj. Douglas L. Smith, incoming sergeant major, stand at attention during 3rd Battalion, 7th Marine Regiment's sergeant major relief and appointment ceremony April 13 on the Combat Center Parade Field.

and unit interpreter during operations Desert Shield and Desert Storm.

As a sergeant, Smith became a drill instructor at MCRD San Diego in April

1994. After serving as a senior drill instructor, he reported to Bravo Company, 3rd Light Armored Reconnaissance Battalion as a staff sergeant, and eventually

served as company gunnery sergeant in 1996.

After serving as platoon sergeant at the Officer Candidates School and as an inspector instructor for India Com-

pany, 3rd Battalion, 24th Marine Regiment, Smith linked up with 7th Marines again in 3/7 where he continues his

See POST, A5

MARADMIN 181/06

All-Marine golf championships

1. The All-Marine golf championships will be held July 29 to August 4 at Marine Corps Air Station Miramar, Calif. Marines will be chosen to participate in a 72-hole medal tournament. The top six men and top three women will proceed to the Armed Forces Championship August 5-11 at Vandenberg Air Force Base, Calif. The top six men and top two women will make up the Armed Forces team which will compete at the CISM Championships August 13-19 in Galway, Ireland.

2. Marines interested in competing must submit applications IAW figure 3-4 of MCO p1700.29 no later than July 1. Applications must include proof of current handicap. Handicap for men must be four or lower and women must have 14 or lower. Applications can be found at <http://www.usmc-mccs.org/sports>. Applications must contain command endorsement stating Marine will be made available to attend all events if selected. Marines stationed at a command with a local MCCS Semper Fit must also send their applications through the Semper Fit athletic director. Applications can be faxed to 703-784-9822.

3. All service members selected to the US armed forces team will be required to have a valid passport in order to advance to CISM. Marines without a valid passport will be authorized to compete at the armed forces championship but will not be considered for the US Armed Forces team.

Sempertoons

By Gunnery Sgt. Charles Wolf



C.O.P. Corner Community Oriented Policing



The proactive voice of crime prevention

Presented by the Provost Marshal's Office Crime Prevention Section

Lost Privacy Act Data

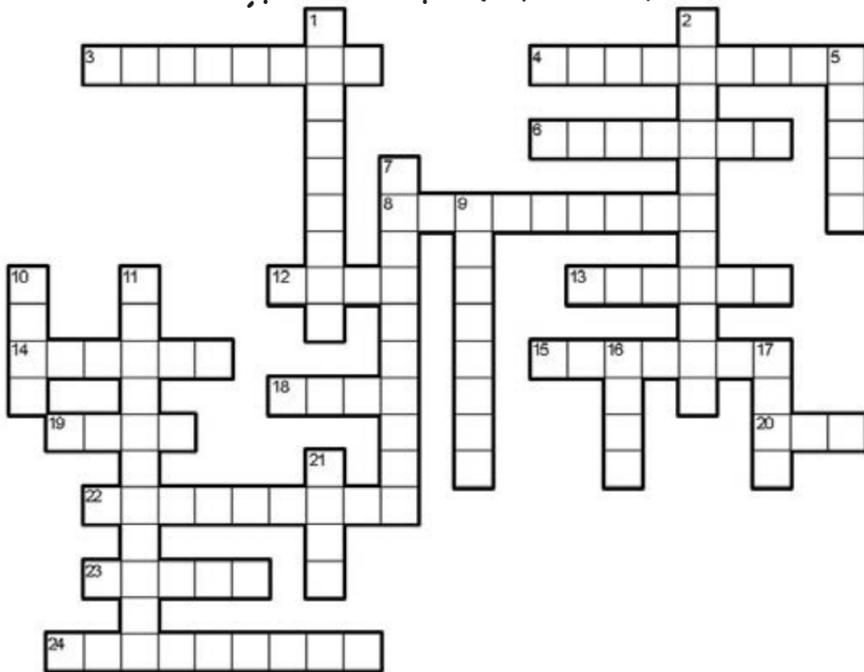
On March 14 approximately 207,750 enlisted Marines privacy act data was lost on a thumb drive aboard Marine Corps Base Quantico. The information lost included names, social security numbers, marital status, and enlistment contract information.

For more information refer to MARADMIN 143/06 which can be accessed through <http://www.usmc.mil>.

The following services are available to on-base personnel and residents through Crime Prevention: literature, briefs, education, crime assessments, safety tips, the Stranger Danger program, McGruff the Crime Dog, the Officer Friendly program, the Property Marking program, and the Child Identification and Fingerprinting program. For more information call Crime Prevention, 830-6094/5457.

Presented by the Provost Marshal's Office Crime Prevention Section

U.S. HISTORY



ACROSS

- 3 Branch of government that interprets laws.
- 4 Author of the Declaration of Independence.
- 6 First major battle between Union and confederate forces was at _____.
- 8 "One small step for man, one giant leap for mankind."
- 12 The transcontinental railway became a reality when East and West tracks met in this state.
- 13 President who had a peanut farm.
- 14 President who was a movie actor.
- 15 President during the civil war.
- 18 Leader of civil rights movement, assassinated in 1968.
- 19 Won a swift victory in the Persian Gulf War.
- 20 How many years is a U.S. senator's term.
- 22 First permanent English colony.
- 23 Number of stars on the flag.
- 24 Branch of government that enforces laws.

DOWN

- 1 Scandal that ended Nixon's presidency.
- 2 Brown vs. Board of education was a supreme court case related to what?
- 5 A Marine on the National Security Council staff convicted for his role in the Iran-Contra scandal.
- 7 First U.S. president.
- 9 Held congressional hearings looking for communist spies in the government.
- 10 Introduced assembly lines and mass production.
- 11 The branch of government that enacts laws.
- 16 Number of justices on the Supreme Court.
- 17 National Aeronautics and Space Administration.
- 21 Number of years between presidential elections.

[Solutions on A4]

Marines, Sailors, and cab drivers: MCOS will reimburse ANY licensed cab company for transportation to the Main Gate, Marine Corps Air Ground Combat Center. Drivers: please legally record information from your fare's military I.D. card. Thank you for participating.

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Centerspeak

"What can the Marine Corps do to improve the quality of life of Marines living in the barracks?"

Opinions expressed in Centerspeak are not necessarily those of the OBSERVATION POST, the Marine Corps or Department of Defense.



LANCE CPL. MICHAEL WILLIAMS
1ST TANK BATTALION, TOW Co.

"I would like to see maintenance work get done more quickly."



PFC. TIM MCGINLEY
3RD LAR, BRAVO COMPANY

"Improve the air conditioning systems and not crowd the rooms."



PFC. JOHN DOODY
2/7, WEAPONS Co.

"They could provide us with better recreation rooms that are more up to date."



LANCE CPL. NICHOLAS ROBERTS
2/7, GOLF Co.

"They could start by not putting three Marines in two-man rooms. Its too crowded and it takes too long to fix the discrepancies."

What's on your mind?

Centerspeak welcomes questions or submissions from service members, Department of Defense civilians and family members.

Address submissions to:
Commanding General
Public Affairs Office
(Attn. Press Chief)
MCAGCC
Box 788200
Twentynine Palms, CA 92278-8200

Or E-mail to:
evan.eagan@usmc.mil

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Heat waves coming towards the Combat Center



CPL. ITZAK LEFLER

Various colored flags next to the Commanding General's building alert Combat Center Marines, Sailors, civilians and families of what precautions to take during the hot summertime.

LANCE CPL. REGINA N. ORTIZ
COMBAT CORRESPONDENT

As summer is creeping up on the Combat Center, beginning May 1 the community will start to look to the heat condition flags to determine whether regular training can continue.

The Robert E. Bush Naval Hospital will use the Wet-Bulb Globe Temperature Index to determine the flag conditions that will be displayed and updated hourly throughout the day from 8 a.m. until one hour after sunset, according to Combat Center Order 6200.3C.

The WBGTI is a heat-stress indicator that considers the effects of temperature, humidity and radiant energy, according to the Integrated Publishing Web site, aerographer and meteorology page, <http://www.tpub.com>.

There are color codes to determine the danger levels of heat, which are the colors of the heat condition flags aboard military installations:

- **Heat condition I** is displayed with a Green Flag, when the WBGTI reaches 80 degrees Fahrenheit. Outdoor activities can be conducted, but with consideration for heavy exercises for non-acclimatized personnel.

- **Heat condition II** is displayed with a yel-

low flag when the WBGTI reaches 85 degrees Fahrenheit. Persons new to the area should not participate in extraneous exercise and activity during the first three weeks of heat exposure.

- **Heat condition III** is displayed with a red flag when the WBGTI reaches 88 to 89.9 degrees Fahrenheit. Any personnel who have not acclimatized to the desert heat for more than 12 weeks should not conduct any strenuous exercise or outdoor training.

- **Heat condition IV** is displayed with a black flag when the WBGTI reaches 90.0 degrees Fahrenheit. Physical training and strenuous exercise should be suspended for all personnel.

This system will be in use from May 1 until September 30. It is set up to prevent heat casualties from strenuous activities in high heat conditions, but it is still possible for some to experience heat injuries.

There are three different types of heat injuries: heat cramps, heat exhaustion and heatstroke.

Heat cramps result in cramping of the arms, legs or stomach and is accompanied by excessive sweating.

Heat exhaustion is caused by loss of water from excessive sweating. Signs of heat exhaustion are, but not limited to: excessive sweating with pale, moist, cool skin; headache, weakness, dizziness, nausea, chills, or confusion.

Heatstroke is a medical emergency, which can result in death. A heat casualty suffering from heatstroke may have red, hot, dry skin, weakness, dizziness, confusion, seizures, nausea, stomach pain, and pulse may be rapid and weak. Unconsciousness or collapse may occur suddenly.

For immediate response first-aid, take the heat casualty to a cool, shady area, or improvise one, and loosen clothing. Have the heat casualty slowly drink one full canteen of water. Spray or pour water on the casualty while fanning him or her, elevate the legs, and massage the extremities and skin of the areas to increase blood flow.

In the case of heat exhaustion and heatstroke, heat casualties should seek professional medical aid as soon as possible.

The Combat Center is located in an area of extreme heat and low humidity. A thorough understanding of the heat conditions and the importance of hydrating are the keys to preventing a heat casualty.

Killer tan can be deadly

CPL. HEIDI E. LOREDO
COMBAT CORRESPONDENT

You work hard to keep yourself healthy, but do you think about your skin every time you step outside?

As the old joke goes, Twentynine Palms may not have much water, but it does have a lot of beach, putting residents at greater risk of skin damage than residents of greener climates. Each unprotected exposure increases one's risk of developing skin cancer.

"The intensity of sun exposure for beach-or-pool goes is certainly elevated," said Perry Robins, M.D., president of The Skin Cancer Foundation. "Water, sand and concrete reflect as much as 90 percent of the sun's rays."

Skin cancer is a disease in which certain body cells don't function right, divide very fast and produce too much tissue that forms a tumor. The two most common kinds of skin cancer are basal cell carcinoma and squamous cell carcinoma. The most serious kind is melanoma.

People who live in areas with year-round, bright sunlight have a higher risk," says an American Cancer Society statement. "For example, the risk of non-melanoma skin cancer is twice as high in Arizona compared to Minnesota. Spending a lot of time outdoors for work or recreation without protective clothing

and sunscreen increases your risk. The risk is also increased for people who live at high altitudes."

As the temperature rises, residents here are shedding their layers and getting reacquainted with the sun, gaining more than the seasonal tan.

The damage can be immediate and long-term, with effects ranging from sunburn, rashes and cell and tissue damage to premature wrinkling and skin cancer. That angry red sunburn can increase the chance of getting skin cancer, the ACA reports, and severe burns can make a person seriously ill.

The society estimates that about 59,580 new cases of melanoma will be diagnosed in 2005. This year, 7,770 people are expected to die of the disease. Between 1980 and 2003, cases of melanoma among caucasians more than tripled in the United States.

"Fair-skinned people are most at risk, but dark-skinned individuals are not completely shielded from the threat of skin cancer," said Robins.

According to the Center for Disease Control and Prevention melanoma can spread to other organs, particularly the lungs and liver. When a malignant melanoma is diagnosed and removed at an early stage it is often cur-

able. But in the later stages the chances of it spreading are much greater and more likely to cause death.

While the odds of acquiring skin cancer are higher for some people because of genetics, the sun's ultra-violet radiation is considered to be the main criminal, according to research conducted by the National Naval Medical Center in Bethesda, Md. Sunbathers and people that work outdoors are not the only ones at risk. Even daily minor sun damage — driving to and from work, walking into a building, going for a lunchtime jog or swim — can build up and cause severe skin problems down the road.

"Since the 100-degree weather does not allow residents to cover up from head-to-toe, sunscreen is the main protection from the sun's rays," said Sandra Goler, dermatologist, American Cancer Association, Rancho Mirage.

Most people benefit from sunscreens with sun protection factor numbers of 15 or more. The SPF number signifies how long a person can stay in the sun without burning. For example, if a person burns in 10 minutes without sunscreen and they apply a liberal dose with a SPF number of 15, they should be protected from sunburn for 150 minutes.

The number of new cases appears to be rising each year. However, the number of deaths due to skin cancer is fairly small.

The Skin Cancer Foundation recommends annual skin exams by a physician. Signs to look for are moles and freckles that became irregular, have uneven borders, turn various shades of color and grow larger than a quarter inch in diameter.

"Any type of skin cancer isn't always noticeable," said Goeler. "Melanomas, for example, are able to hide in between toes and fingers. The [society] urges anyone who notices an abnormality on their skin to consult a physician as soon as possible to get treated."



AMERICAN CANCER SOCIETY

A malignant melanoma like the one pictured here is often curable if diagnosed and removed early.

DoD: 'Take a Stand Against Domestic Violence'

LANCE CPL. REGINA N. ORTIZ

COMBAT CORRESPONDENT

The Department of Defense launched a new campaign this year in an effort prevent domestic violence in military families.

In partnership with the National Domestic Violence Hotline, DoD dubbed the campaign Take a Stand Against Domestic Violence, according to a press release from Marine Corps Community Services Feb. 21.

"The Department of Defense is not immune to the broader societal problem of domestic violence and has a responsi-

bility to act when it occurs," said Dr. David S.C. Chu, Undersecretary of Defense for Personnel and Readiness, in the MCCS press release. "This campaign effectively calls to action those in our military population to assist victims of domestic violence."

The NDVH is open 24 hours a day, 365 days a year. They provide crisis intervention, safety planning, and information and referrals to agencies in all 50 states, Puerto Rico and the U.S. Virgin Islands. Assistance is available in more than 140 languages and a teletypewriter line is available for the deaf, deaf-blind and hard of hearing, according to the hotline's Web site, <http://www.ndvh.org>.

The DoD campaign is designed to educate service members about domestic violence and provide a link to the hotline services, said Perry Ford, education and prevention specialist.

"We want people who have seen anything with domestic violence to take a stand and do something about it before it becomes a more serious issue, causes more serious injuries, or even death," said Ford.

Death is a common end to a relationship with domestic violence. On average, three women are murdered by their husbands or boyfriends every day, according to the Bureau of Justice Statistics Crime and Data Report.

So how does it get to this point?

"Victims are afraid of the alternatives," said a source

from the Family Advocacy Program, who wishes to remain anonymous for personal reasons. "Some victims don't want to lose the benefits of the military, such as the living quarters or medical benefits; or ruin the career of the military member.

"And some think the alternatives are worse than the situation they are already in," she continued.

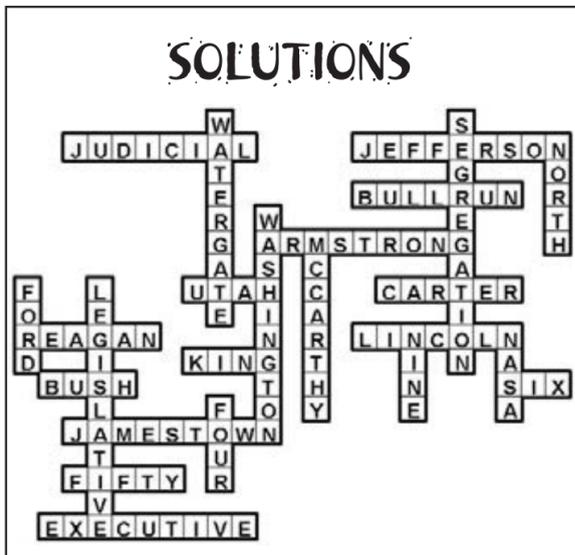
The alternatives include shelters, or safe-houses, where victims are given a place to stay, along with food, until they are ready to start providing for themselves and their dependants, if any.

"Some people think of it as charity or along the lines of a homeless shelter," said the FAP representative. "They are actually really nice and many are sponsored by and receive donations from celebrities, who regularly check the condition of the shelters."

Not all victims have to go to a shelter. If there is another place they would like to go, such as a family member's house, there are agencies available to provide financial support and transportation.

The NDVH has connections to these services and with this new campaign, DoD is hoping to raise awareness of the available services for victims of domestic violence.

For more information, call 1-800-799-SAFE (7233), or 1-800-787-3224 (TTY).



LANCE CPL. REGINA N. ORTIZ

COMBAT CORRESPONDENT

With the Department of Defense and the National Domestic Violence Hotline's campaign, Take a Stand Against Domestic Violence, the word is spreading about this issue and how to combat it.

There are many ways to categorize domestic violence and many ways to predict the onset of it, said a representative from the Family Advocacy Program, who requested to remain anonymous.

In a two-hour class given to offenders and victims of domestic violence by the FAP, the definition is broken down, and broken down again, and again, she explained.

Spouse abuse can be physical, sexual or emotional abuse, or property violence; inflicted on a partner in a lawful marriage, said the FAP

representative.

Grabbing, pushing, holding, slapping, choking, punching, sitting or standing on, kicking, hitting with objects, along with assaults involving knives, firearms or other weapons, are all examples of physical abuse. These tactics are used to intimidate, control or force the victim to do something against his or her will.

"Many husbands don't believe it is possible to rape his own wife," the FAP representative explained, "but 'no' means 'no' whether or not the couple is married."

Sexual abuse is when one partner forces the other to engage in any sexual activity through the use of physical violence, intimidation, or explicit or implicit threat of future violence.

Emotional abuse is one of the most common and most dangerous forms of abuse.

"It is so dangerous because

it can go on for a long time without anyone noticing," explained the FAP representative. "It's not as noticeable as a black eye, but it does severe damage to someone's mind."

Emotional abuse can be characterized as threats, extreme jealousy, mental degradation, and isolating behavior, all used to intimidate and control the victim.

Property violence is a kind of abuse used to scare or intimidate the victim. The offender breaks surrounding property, kicks or punches walls or doors, throws items, damages automobiles or injures pets to terrorize their victim.

Child abuse is very similar to spouse abuse. It can be categorized as physical, sexual, emotional and neglect.

Physical abuse of a child is the same as physical abuse of a spouse. Sexual abuse is somewhat different because a

child is considered not to have the capacity to consent to any sexual behavior.

Neglect of a child is the failure to provide nourishment, clothing, shelter, healthcare, education, or supervision by the parent, guardian, or anyone responsible for the child's welfare.

The Family Advocacy Program works directly with victims and offenders to give counseling, guidance and links to services that provide help if the program cannot. Many victims find common ground with others, said the FAP representative.

"All of our clients end up surprised about the fact they are not alone," she explained. "Especially men. Society targets men as the offenders, but we have quite a few men stepping up and getting help."

For more information or to get help, call the Family Advocacy Program at 830-6345.

Behind the term: Domestic Violence

Tanks returns



SGT. ROBERT L. FISHER III

Signs adorn fences around Victory Field and tennis courts to welcome back loved ones from 1st Tank Battalion as they return from Iraq Monday and Thursday.

SIMULATION, A1

controllers for close air support on a simulated radio handset calling for fire with close air support from an Air Force AC-130 being piloted in real time by an actual crew in Florida.

"This is great training which benefits both the Marines and the Air Force crews 100 percent," he said.

The 16 Marines in the Simulator Wednesday began by receiving instructions on how the system works, before putting on the headset and getting behind the computers and joysticks.

Simulation training is never a substitute for live training, but by doing the simulation in real time, training is more productive and develops a higher degree of proficiency for the real thing, said Yates.

"Obviously, nothing is ever going to be as good as physically calling for fire, but doing it with the actual crew helped out tremendously," said Capt. James Vallario, air officer, 3/4, who took part in the training at the simulation center.

"First of all, it's valuable training for us because we don't get to with AC-130s too often," continued Vallario. "But, it's possible you may get to do that in theater, so it's good to do that simulation for practice, but also being able to work with an actual AC-130 crew helped. They were able to provide us with instant feedback, and vice versa, in real time."

The system was linked up through the secure Joint Training and Experimentation Network, and allowed for

a high-bandwidth connection to Hurlburt Field.

"Twenty-nine Palms was used in part because we were the first to have a JTEN node installed," said Yates. "It allows us to connect to other sim centers throughout the Department of Defense to do this live training."

This was also the first time a joint and distributed training simulation has been used to train at the small-unit level, said Yates.

"There have been joint distributed operations in the past, but they were big," he said. "They were on the level of a general and his joint staff."

"This is now at the user level," Yates continued. "You can't get any simpler than the individual Marine on the handset. That is the level things actually take place on — it's where the rubber meets the road."

Another benefit for AC-130 crew members taking part in the exercise was having the ability to receive fire missions from real Marines on the ground, which usually only occurs in a combat zone.

Yates said the use of a virtual battlefield simulation not only allows vital critiquing, but saves hundreds of thousands of dollars while allowing units to train locally.

"Last year, the Air Force figured out that if they were to actually fly out for this and conduct this training, it could cost more than \$270,000," he said. "With this virtual training, it probably costs no more than \$5,000. This also saves the Marine Corps money because we don't have to send anybody to Florida."

As more Marine Corps installations expand their sim-

ulation centers and install JTEN nodes, Yates said he hopes to see exercises in the future conducted alongside Marines from other Marine Corps installations and would like to see these drills become more frequent.

"There is no definite time-frame set for repeating this," he said. "We want to say within six months, but I'm hopeful we could start doing this with other Marine facilities more regularly. It would allow them to be able to train with Marine air support that they are going to work with on a more regular basis while deployed."

Although on the virtual battlefield, victory may seem only a mouse click away, Marines still take the training seriously knowing it is a tool to help them learn so they can hear "all targets destroyed" when it really counts.



LANCE CPL. MICHAEL S. CIFUENTES

Sgt. Maj. Walter H. Kilgore, outgoing sergeant major, and Sgt. Maj. Douglas L. Smith, incoming sergeant major, stand at attention during 3rd Battalion, 7th Marine Regiment, sergeant major relief and appointment ceremony April 13 on the Combat Center Parade Field.

POST, A1

journey in the Corps.

"He [Smith] was a very good first sergeant for Kilo Company," said Lance Cpl. Al Meisenhelder, an infantryman with India Company, 3/7. "I always remember him as being very approachable and well-connected with the Marines of the battalion. I'm really happy that he will be our battalion sergeant major now."

During the ceremony, Smith addressed the Marines and Sailors of the battalion with words of gratitude.

"I feel very fortunate to be a part of this battalion still," said Smith. "I've always enjoyed being a part of 7th Marines. Our battalion did a great job in [Ar] Ramadi and we're just going to keep doing great things. When the Marine Corps calls upon us to deploy again, we'll be prepared."

After serving as battalion sergeant major with 3/7 since November of 2004, Kilgore continues his journey in the Marine Corps where he will serve as Marine Aircraft Group

36 sergeant major in Norfolk, Va.

Kilgore's journey in the Corps began in 1981 when he enlisted to become a radio operator. His first duty station was with Headquarters and Service Company, 3rd FSSG, Okinawa, Japan. Since then, Kilgore served an array of billets from field communications center chief with 7th Communications Battalion to company first sergeant with Delta Company, 3rd Assault Amphibian Battalion.

"It's been a great honor to be a part of this battalion," said Kilgore, a Willard, Ohio, native, as he addressed the battalion during the ceremony. "I am very appreciative for what we've accomplished since I've been here. We helped over 60,000 Iraqi civilians come out and vote for the elections. We found over 500 improvised explosive devices. We saved a lot of lives in that county. We lost some great Marines along the way, and we will never let them be forgotten."

"I ask that you stand tall and go home and tell your story," concluded Kilgore.

Hundreds line up to join Iraqi Army



CPL. ANTONIO ROSAS

Iraqi citizens were marked with either an "A" for accepted, or an "X" for denied, by recruiting officials following an Iraqi Army recruiting drive held in Al Qa'im, Iraq, March 24.

CPL. ANTONIO ROSAS
1ST MARINE DIVISION

CAMP AL QA'IM, Iraq — They came from far and near and waited hours in long lines under a hot Iraqi sun in hopes of joining the Army.

Nearly 400 Iraqi males — some as young as 15 — showed up for an Iraqi Army recruiting drive held at the Marines' battle position in this region along the Euphrates River in western Al Anbar Province.

Of the 400 men who showed up to enlist, 179 were accepted — a substantial number, according to Coalition and Iraqi Army officials.

The drive, conducted by Iraqi soldiers and Coalition Forces, was an attempt to bolster numbers in one of several Brigades within the Iraqi Army's 10 divisions, according to Army Capt. Jack S.

Rebolledo, one of the Military Transition Team training advisors for the Iraqi Army unit here.

The recruitment drive was part of an Iraqi Army recruiting campaign aimed at incorporating more Sunnis into Iraqi Security Forces, according to Coalition officials.

The Iraqi Army unit partnered with Marines from 1st Battalion, 7th Marine Regiment to provide security in this region of the Sunni triangle, spent the day screening potential future soldiers.

The Iraqi Government wants to have a better ethnic mix of Iraqis in its Army, and hopes to recruit 5,000 new soldiers by year's end.

"This is the first recruiting effort in the campaign aimed at engaging Sunnis and getting them into government positions," said Maj. Timothy

G. Burton, I Marine Expeditionary Force, Iraq Security Force advisor.

Although hundreds of military age males showed up with the hope of becoming a "Jundi" — an Iraqi Army private — many were turned away, unable to meet certain criteria required to join the Army.

If they weren't too young or old to enlist, many of the applicants were turned away because they were illiterate or had "medical deficiencies," according to the Iraqi Army officials in charge of recruiting efforts.

Literacy is a new requirement for enlistment in the Iraqi Army.

"Illiteracy is a big killer," said Capt. Seldon B. Hale, recruiting advisor for the Multi-National Security Transition Command-Iraq. "Most of the people showing up today can't read or write."

More than 50-percent of the soldiers in the current Iraqi Army are illiterate, said Rebolledo.

As the soldiers progress to learn more sophisticated military occupational specialties, there is a greater need for those soldiers to be able to

read and write, added Rebolledo.

This new literacy requirement accounted for more than 50-percent of those who were turned down at this recent recruiting drive.

However, Coalition officials say that in order for Iraqi enlisted soldiers to fill more advanced leadership billets as noncommissioned officers, they must be able to read and write.

Though many were turned down, the hundreds of Iraqi men and teenagers were not deterred from waiting hours in long lines to see if they were qualified to become part of Iraq's new Army.

While Coalition Forces aided the Iraqi Army with perimeter security and transportation of recruits to the drive, it was ultimately the Iraq Ministry of Defense officials who decided who made the cut and who didn't.

The panel of Iraqi officials — who screened hundreds of applicants — consisted of several administrative clerks and an Iraqi doctor who performed basic physicals and literacy tests.

To be accepted into the Army, recruits had to pass the

physical and had to be able to read and write.

Many were turned away for both of these reasons.

Still, recruiting efforts in Al Anbar have been steady for the Iraqi Government.

In the past six months, mobile recruiting teams have traveled the region to screen hundreds of potential new soldiers, many of whom have been accepted. Furthermore, there have been no insurgent attacks during the drives, unlike recent Iraqi Army and police recruiting drives throughout other parts of Iraq.

While Iraqi Government officials conduct the screening, Coalition Forces attempt to bolster the number of applicants by soliciting to local and tribal leadership in Euphrates River valley towns.

So far, it's working, and the Iraqi Government is putting men in uniforms.

"We are just here to help escort the Iraqis," said Hale, a 31-year-old from Amarillo, Texas. "They are the ones who make the decisions."

Although less than half of those who showed were accepted for enlistment, Coalition and Iraqi leadership are confident the recruiting drives will continue to produce qualified individuals.

"This is just the tip of the spear of that effort," said Burton, 35, from Belmont, Miss.

For those applicants who were accepted, their transition from civilian to soldier has just begun. After their acceptance, those who passed the initial screening were escorted to the local Iraqi Army camp for further administrative processing and background checking.

They will then undergo several weeks of basic training before being assigned to an Army unit, more than likely one of the two Iraqi Army brigades in Al Anbar Province.

During the recruiting drive, the prospective soldiers shuffled from one area to the next as they made their way through the screening. Many

eagerly asked the Iraqi soldiers questions, absorbing as much knowledge as to what lies ahead for them.

Many recruits, who asked not to be identified, claimed they are joining the Army to protect their families from "bombs and insurgents who come to threaten their families."

Two recruits, a 20-year-old from Husaybah, the other a 19-year-old from neighboring Sadah, claimed that their families were terrified of sending them to the Army due to the potential threat of attacks against their families.

Both said they've heard stories of Iraqi soldiers being targeted by insurgents, but the stories have not deterred them from enlisting. Moreover, their families are now encouraging them to enlist — a change of heart stemmed from an ever-growing presence of other Iraq soldiers working together with Coalition Forces.

Some who were turned down at the recruiting drive haven't given up hope of serving as part of the Iraqi Security Forces. Many said they will apply for positions with Iraqi police forces.

Those who made the cut had to say goodbye to friends who were rejected, but were happy none-the-less for their acceptance, which will bring them about \$400 a month — a substantial increase in wages for most of the young men, especially in rural western Iraq where unemployment is high.

Most said they'll use the money to support their families back home.

"I am excited," said one 20-year-old Iraqi man, through an interpreter. "I am not worried about basic training, but I will miss my family. It took me two days to convince them to let me come here today."

"It's expensive to live and the pay in the Army is good," said another recruit through an interpreter. "I want to protect my family and keep the area safe."

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Iraqi soldier proud to patrol 'mean streets'



CPL. ANTONIO ROSAS

A scorching mid-day sun is no deterrent for Iraqi soldiers conducting a foot patrol through Sad'ah — one of Iraq's western Al Anbar Province cities.

CPL. ANTONIO ROSAS

1ST MARINE DIVISION

WESTERN AL ANBAR PROVINCE, Iraq — The townspeople of Sad'ah, a town near the Iraq-Syria border, wave and greet a heavily-armed Iraqi soldier as he patrols the streets, hunting for would-be insurgents.

One person who called this town home, grew from a child to a trained soldier and now strives to keep them safe by disrupting insurgent activity.

"Hadi" has an advantage over the other "Jundi" - Iraqi Army privates — since he has an intimate knowledge of the area of operations.

Just as his fellow soldiers are proud that they've taken the lead on daily security patrols, Hadi is equally proud to keep his neighbors and family safe from improvised explosive devices while sending the message to insurgents that this is his turf.

"I feel good about serving my country and keeping the area safe from terrorists for my family," said Hadi, a rifleman with 2nd Battalion, 3rd Brigade, 7th Iraq Army Division, through an interpreter. "The people that know me here get to see me walking the streets."

Today, the 33-year-old and his platoon conducted a final gear inspection before departing the security of their forward operating base. The mission: a foot patrol to a neighboring town to establish a presence in the community and dissuade insurgents from using the area as a safe haven.

Before this area was turned over to the Iraqi Army for security operations, Marines had made several patrols through the area in Humvees, but never on foot. The rural town was not deemed a high priority for insurgent activity, according to Coalition officials, however, Iraqi Forces were bent on leaving

no stone unturned.

The Iraqi soldiers conduct foot patrols — vice "mounted" patrols in military vehicles — to allow them to interact with locals and maintain a steady presence in the area, according to Coalition servicemembers who shadow the Iraqi soldiers during such operations providing a mentoring and advisory role.

Several Iraqi Army officers, including a major, patrolled the streets alongside the Iraqi privates on their most recent patrol in order to speak with the townsfolk and receive feedback from citizens regarding the Iraqi Army's presence.

The Iraqi Army leader went house-to-house to speak with the town's residents, and was for the most part, greeted warmly by residents.

While the Iraqi commanders took a few minutes to speak with the locals, an elderly man, easily in his mid- 70s, expressed gratitude to the Iraqi soldiers, according to one of the Coalition Forces' interpreters.

"I am glad that I can walk the streets in peace knowing you are here," said the man. "A few months ago it was not possible, especially at night, because there were many bad men on the streets."

Other villagers who were busy working outside their homes would occasionally stop what they were doing and wave at the soldiers welcoming their presence and lending a peaceful atmosphere to the Iraqi soldiers advance.

Although the Iraqi soldiers did not encounter or capture any insurgents during the patrol, their presence showed locals that the Iraqi Army is capable of providing security to the Iraqi people, while Coalition Forces are beginning to take a strictly advisory role, according to Army 1st Lt. Dean A. White, Military Transition Team Chief. Transition teams are groups of Coalition servicemembers partnered with Iraqi Army units. The teams mentor and advise each Iraqi unit, assisting them in the transition to operating independently.

As the Iraqi soldiers made their way through the town, their AK-47 service rifles draped over their shoulders, they mingled briefly with the townspeople and handed out candy and snacks to gleeful children.

Leadership from the transition team partnered with Hadi's unit said Iraqi soldiers like Hadi are invaluable in helping Iraq's road to self-stability, as they are quickly earning the trust of the local populace.

Furthermore, the transition team staff praised Hadi's bravery and leadership ability.

"Not only does he know the neighborhood but he is a natural leader," said Ken E. Miller, the transition team's operations training officer. "Other soldiers follow him."

The 48-year-old from Hershey, Penn., credits Hadi's strong leadership capabilities to his professional attitude as well as a strong sense of dedication.

Miller pointed out that the Iraqi has provided valuable intel-

ligence reports, which have lead to a variety of successful counterinsurgency operations.

After a day of patrolling through the streets and speaking with old neighbors, Hadi said he felt good about the day's mission. It gave him a chance to shine among the people he grew up with, he said.

"I am happy to be a soldier and I am losing my nervousness every day," said Hadi, who admits that when he first became a soldier eight months ago, he was nervous about encountering improvised explosive devices. He was aware of the death toll the bombs accounted for among both Coalition and Iraqi forces as well as innocent people.

Five years ago, Hadi said he was forced to serve as a soldier under Saddam Hussein's regime — a stark contrast from the all-volunteer Iraqi Army of today, he said.

"If Sadaam said 'you will fight,' then you had to fight or he would cut off your fingers," said Hadi.

Hadi said he was glad when Sadaam's rule collapsed. He made very little money in the Army while having to provide for his children. He juggled his stint in the Army with another job to make ends meet.

"I am proud to be a soldier now," said Hadi, who volunteered to enlist in the new Iraqi Army to transform the war-torn streets of local neighborhoods to a place where even his children could be safe.

Miller and the rest of the transition team will continue to mentor the Iraqi unit until Coalition Forces deem the Iraqis ready to relieve the current U.S. military unit here of all security operations in the area.

"We have the knowledge that they can function in this area independently," said Miller.

And progress is steady for these Iraqi soldiers, as they are beginning to display the confidence needed to function as an organized military unit, as evidenced by their recent patrol, said Miller.

"Today we were given a map and simply followed them," added Miller, who affirmed that just months ago their team was introducing patrol tactics to the new Jundi soldiers.

The transition team, which is all Americans, had to plan and help execute nearly all of the Iraqi unit's company-sized operations, as well as the majority of their logistical support convoys.

"The Iraqis are handling all logistical re-supplying of their battle positions from now on," Miller said.

By year's end, Coalition Forces say Iraqi soldiers will be ready to completely relieve Coalition Forces of security operations in Iraq's Al Anbar Province. With soldiers like Hadi at the lead and progress of the Iraqi Army unit here continuous, Marines here say the Iraqi soldiers will be able to meet that goal and begin to assume control of the various forward operating bases in the Al Qa'im region.

RCT-7 Marines celebrate Easter Sunday in Iraq's Al Anbar Province

STAFF SGT. JIM GOODWIN

1ST MARINE DIVISION

CAMP AL ASAD, Iraq — Half a world away from families and friends back in the United States, thousands of U.S. Marines, Sailors and other servicemembers spent Easter Sunday in a combat zone here.

At this airbase in Iraq's western Al Anbar Province, church services on the holiday which celebrates Christ's resurrection served as a small break from daily operations and seven-day work weeks for U.S. servicemembers here.

Easter Sunday is a chance for Christians to "renew baptismal promises," said Lt. Cmdr. John T. Hannigan, a Catholic Priest and military chaplain for Regimental Combat Team 7 here.

Though liturgy is celebrated the same here as it is back in the States, worship in Iraq for America's military men and women allows for a more "focused" experience, said Hannigan.

"Since many times we don't have the religious supplies here that we are used to having for religious services back in the States, we make do with what we have and the symbolism seems to come out," said Hannigan, a native of Chicago.

"It all seems holier because I am a couple hundred miles away from where Jesus walked the earth," said Cpl. David M. Jeske, a 21-year-old from Auburndale, Wis.

Jeske, an ammunition chief for 3rd Light Armored Reconnaissance Battalion, RCT-7, attended Easter Sunday services at his unit's remote base in the middle of Al Anbar's barren desert — Camp Korean Village.

While some forward operating bases offered Easter Sunday services for U.S. servicemembers today, those stationed in more remote locations in western Al Anbar

Province will have full Easter services throughout the week, said Hannigan.

Navy Lt. Cmdr. Christopher M. Jack, a medical officer for the Forward Resuscitative Surgical Suite at the Marines' base in Al Qa'im near the Syrian border, is missing out on two special days with his family back in California — Easter Sunday, and his son's fourth birthday, which is tomorrow.

"I've been thinking about my wife and son the entire time," said Jack, a 34-year-old from Joplin, Mo. "My thoughts are with them now."

More than 23,000 Marines,

Sailors and soldiers of the 1st Marine Expeditionary Force are currently deployed in Al Anbar Province.

RCT-7, a Marine infantry

regiment based out of Twentynine Palms, Calif., is responsible for providing security to and mentoring Iraqi Security Forces in the

roughly 30,000 square miles of western Al Anbar, stretching from just west of the Euphrates River to the Jordanian and Syrian borders.

3rd LAR Dragoons lend a helping hand



1ST LT. NATHAN BRADEN

Marines from D Company, 3rd Light Armored Reconnaissance Battalion keep an eye out for potential threats while making their way over the Thar Thar Dam north of Fallujah April 6. The Twenty-nine Palms, Calif.-based company is temporarily assigned to Regimental Combat Team 5 near Fallujah, Iraq.

1ST LT. NATHAN BRADEN
REGIMENTAL COMBAT TEAM 5

CAMP FALLUJAH, Iraq — Some of the Corps' baddest gunslingers rode in from the West recently to lend a helping hand to the Marines near Fallujah.

Marines of D Company, 3rd Light Armored Reconnaissance Battalion arrived at Camp Fallujah March 18 for temporary duty with Regimental Combat Team 5.

"It shows their great flexibility and adaptability to transition from the west," said Lt. Col. Nathan I. Nastase, RCT-5's 39-year-old operations officer from Indiana, Pa.

Arriving in Iraq in early March, 3rd LAR

Battalion replaced 1st LAR under RCT-7 for operations in western Al Anbar Province, near the Syrian Border. The company operated for several days near the border town of Al Qaim before receiving their marching orders with RCT-5.

"I thought we would be working out west near Al Qaim for the whole deployment," said Gunnery Sgt. Daniel L. Curtis, 32, the company's gunnery sergeant from Bellevue, Wash. "We were there for about three days before we were called to Area of Operations Raleigh."

As the company's senior enlisted tactical advisor, Curtis offered advice on the area because of his experience during his last deployment to Iraq.

"I was with Charlie Company on my last deployment operating in this area," Curtis said. "I've been able to give the company some 'intel' from my previous experience."

Curtis said that even though he is familiar with the areas around Fallujah, he understands that some things likely changed since his last deployment.

"It's helpful to know the terrain and atmosphere, but a lot has changed," Curtis added.

The Dragoons, as the company is known, supported 1st Battalion, 1st Marine Regiment soon after arriving during a sweeping operation in the battalion's zone. The company used their speed and mobility to quickly establish blocking position as grunts from the battalion

searched for insurgents.

The company's most recent mission was an extended security operation into the Northern Regimental Security Area, a rural area located north of RCT-5's area of operations.

"We are perfect to work in the NRSA because of our unique capabilities of speed and firepower," said Capt. Hunter "Ripley" Rawlings, the 34-year-old company commander from Boulder, Colo. "We are able to move quickly and get around the enemy's rear area, disrupting his command and control, supply and training areas. Basically, we can get into his comfort zone and poke him in the eye."

The company spent several days keeping the highways clear of roadside bombs, establishing observation posts and looking for insurgents.

They performed a critical mission, Nastase said. "They allowed us to maintain a presence in areas we might otherwise be unable to address."

The change of scenery has been a welcome event for some of the company's Marines.

"I was expecting to be in the same area but it's nice floating around because it helps the time go by quick," said Cpl. Peter D. Virtue, 24, a Light Armored Vehicle crewman from Denair, Calif. Virtue deployed last year to Iraq with D Company, but operated entirely in the western side of the province.

"I've never seen these areas," he added. "It's kind of nice seeing these areas where the other Marines are at."

Their mission has additional benefits beyond sight seeing and visiting fellow Marines.

"It's good to change up the terrain and situation on the Marines to keep them on their toes and avoid complacency," said 1st Lt. Patrick H. Murray, the 26-year-old company executive officer from Charlottesville, Va.

Dragoons swoop in on insurgents, weapons caches

1ST LT. NATHAN BRADEN
REGIMENTAL COMBAT TEAM 5

NORTHERN REGIMENTAL SECURITY AREA, Iraq — The concepts of speed and surprise are as old as warfare itself, and one unit proves they are still as effective as ever.

The Marines of D Company, 3rd Light Armored Reconnaissance Battalion used these concepts to conduct a cordon and search operation in the vicinity of the Thar Thar Dam April 6.

"We are going into the enemy's rear area for a raid-style cordon-and-search in a typical, traditional LAR mission," said Capt. Hunter "Ripley" Rawlings, the company's commanding officer while briefing his men prior to the operation.

Reports of insurgents waging a murder-and-intimidation campaign against residents in this rural area north

of Fallujah prompted the operation.

"The violence undermines the new Iraqi government and our mission here as well," said 1st Lt. Patrick H. Murray, the 26-year-old company

executive officer from Charlottesville, Va. "It's important to gain the confidence of the people and let them know we are here to protect them and keep them safe."

The area lies far to the

north of major population centers and has a sparse coalition presence.

"We bring to the fight the ability to just show-up with ease with lots of firepower and let people know we are

taking care of bad guys," Murray said.

The company left Camp Fallujah the day before the operation to spend the night closer to their objective. Marines awoke before dawn, loaded their vehicles and were ready to roll out of the assembly area at first light.

The company headquarters established a forward command operations center while 1st and 2nd Platoons cordoned the objective area and searched for insurgents and weapons caches.

Two AH-1W Super Cobra attack helicopters flew a pattern above the area during the operation as a show of force and to provide observation from the sky.

The operation resulted in the detention of eight suspected insurgents and the discovery of a weapons cache consisting of four AK-47 assault rifles.

"I saw some guys standing around when we came down the dam," said Pfc. Jonathan G. Almeida, a 20-year-old scout from Beeville, Texas. "We searched them — they had fake ID's — and thought they

could possibly be insurgents."

Marines carefully filled out detention paperwork to fully document the circumstances of the detentions. The paperwork will be used by higher headquarters to review individual detention cases and ensure there is enough cause to keep them detained.

"We have to process them properly to ensure they don't get away with what they're doing," said Lance Cpl. Andrew M. Honer, a 20-year-old armorer from Phoenix.

The mission was one of the first company-sized operations the Marines have conducted since arriving in Iraq last month.

"We definitely disrupted their movements, so I consider that mission success, not to mention all the detainees we got," said Rawlings, a 34-year-old from Boulder, Colo. "Everybody did a great job. In fast, out fast, kicking ass in the middle, that's the Dragoon style."

"It was done the way it should have been done," Almeida added. "Everything went smoothly and nobody got hurt."



1ST LT. NATHAN BRADEN

Sgt. Joseph L. Massey, a 26-year-old scout squad leader from Shelbyville, Ky., with D Company, 3rd Light Armored Reconnaissance Battalion prepares to conduct an explosive material residue test on a suspected insurgent during a cordon and search operation north of Fallujah April 6.

3rd LAR maps out traditional mission

1ST LT. NATHAN BRADEN
REGIMENTAL COMBAT TEAM 5

NORTHERN REGIMENTAL SECURITY AREA, Iraq — Call it Light Armored Reconnaissance Version 2.6. This one looks a lot like the original.

Marines riding atop of light armored vehicles found themselves performing a traditional, but not-very-often executed mission of searching for the best path forward.

A recent route reconnaissance mission from Regimental Combat Team 5 gave the Marines of D Company, 3rd LAR a chance to put their traditional scouting skills into action.

“Route recons are a very traditional LAR mission,” said Capt. Hunter “Ripley” Rawlings, D Company’s 34-year-old commander from Boulder, Colo.

Since Operation Iraqi Freedom, LAR units have basically been used as highly mobile infantry, but going into the enemy’s rear area and gathering information for higher headquarters is one of their core competencies, he added.

The reconnaissance was lead by 1st Lt. Michael D. Simon, a veteran LAR Marine on his second deployment to Iraq as a platoon commander with D Co.

“I’ve done a bunch of zone recons but this is the first actual route recon with soil samples, water speeds and everything,” said Simon, the 25-year-old commander of 1st Platoon from North Canton, Ohio.

A zone reconnaissance usually involves a unit conducting a general investigation of a region to gather information on the overall situation there. A route reconnaissance requires the unit to collect detailed information in an area to determine its potential use for military vehicle traffic.

Marines are required to collect and classify soil samples, measure critical turns in roadways, determine the capacity of bridges and search for alternate fording sites of rivers and streams.

“These recons are important because the higher-ups use them to make plans,” said Cpl. Peter D. Virtue, a 24-year-old scout from Denair, Calif. “The big wigs may make a mission and instead of using the big highway as the main avenue of approach to the objective, they may want secondaries.”

Throughout the mission, the Marines stayed on the look out for overhangs, sharp turns or other obstacles that could possibly slow down or prevent units from moving through an area.

Digital photographs were also taken during the mission to provide military planners with up-to-date visual imagery.

All of the collected information goes into an engineering report and sent to higher headquarters.

“We learned how to do all this stuff in LAV Leader’s Course, but it’s been a while,” Simon added.



1ST LT. NATHAN BRADEN
Lance Cpl. Andrew M. Honer, an armorer with D Company, 3rd Light Armored Reconnaissance Battalion keeps an eye out for potential threats during a reconnaissance mission north of Fallujah April 7.

Iraqi soldiers go solo in Al Anbar province

CPL. ANTONIO ROSAS
1ST MARINE DIVISION

UBAYDI, Iraq — Iraqi soldiers have taken their first steps toward functioning entirely on their own in this remote region of northwestern Iraq.

More than 100 soldiers from the 2nd Battalion, 3rd Brigade, 7th Iraqi Army Division conducted their first self-sustaining operation to quell insurgents in Iraq’s Al Anbar province March 23.

The uniformed Iraqi men conducted a “cordon and knock” in this town of 5,000, providing perimeter security and searching house-to-house for signs of insurgent activity. They also interacted with the local populace, with minimal supervision from the unit’s Military Transition Team: Coalition service members assigned to track and guide each Iraqi military unit’s transition to independent operations.

“They [Iraqi soldiers] were the ones knocking on doors, meeting with the people and shaking hands,” said 1st Lt. Dean A. White, MiTT team chief. “They looked strong out there.”

The operation resulted in no tangible results, such as hidden weapons caches or captured insurgents.

Still, Coalition and Iraqi military leadership here say the operation was a success, as it put Iraqi forces in the driver’s seat and allowed locals to see their nation’s Army providing security.

“They planned and executed the operation by themselves instead of us guiding them,” said Army Staff Sgt. Ken E. Miller, MiTT training officer. “They [Iraqi Army] are ready to show people that they can do this on their own.”

The 48-year-old from Hershey, Pa., credited the success of the 2nd Battalion’s recent operation to strong noncommissioned officer leadership within the ranks: corporals and sergeants leading squads and platoons. The Iraqis’ performance — especially that of the unit’s “Jundis,” or junior enlisted soldiers — was enough to impress Miller.

In the past, Iraqi soldiers conducted combined operations with Coalition forces. They’ve had to heavily rely on Coalition forces for everything from convoy security and logistics to operational planning and tactical decision making.

Now, the Iraqis are beginning to take over these types of operations while the Coali-

tion units they’re partnered with take a backseat role.

“I am very happy with the Jundi. They did a good job and we were able to talk with the people and show them the Iraqi Army,” said one Iraqi Army captain, the unit’s operations chief. “The Americans were just here to help us.”

The 35-year-old from Basrah said the Iraqi soldiers want to establish a working relationship with the people to help stop insurgents’ intimidation of the residents along this town that borders the Euphrates River in northwestern Al Anbar Province.

“The people here are afraid of those people that come over from the other side of the river with guns and tell them not to help the Army,” said the Captain. “That is why I want to have good relations with these people.”

Meanwhile, the 1st Bn.,

7th Marines — the Marine unit partnered with Iraqi soldiers from 2nd Bn. — will continue to provide security in this region near the Syrian border. Coalition leadership say the Iraqis will spearhead this mission by year’s end.

he operation allowed Miller and other MiTT staff members to identify any deficiencies within the unit before they conduct their next operation.

Currently, Marines from A Company, 1st Battalion, 7th Marine Regiment are partnered with this Iraqi unit. The two forces share the “battle space,” or area of operations, which encompasses this town.

“The goal is for the Iraqi unit to become an independent force, where the Marines will provide only a mentoring role,” said Miller. “This will be the most effective way of

turning over the battle positions to the Iraqis.”

Last week’s operation spawned another Iraqi Army achievement when soldiers executed their first logistics re-supply to six different battle positions the night prior to the operation.

“They [Iraq Army] will be able to run their own logistics convoys from now on,” White assured.

The success here comes on the heels of other recent achievements of Iraqi military

units in western Al Anbar. Two weeks ago, an Iraqi Army company from 2nd Battalion, 2nd Brigade, conducted a similar independent operation in Khaffajiyah — a village along the Euphrates River about 90 miles east of the Syrian border.

A handful of Iraqi soldiers from 2nd Brigade in Al Asad recently graduated a three-week Humvee course and received 24 of the vehicles from the Iraqi Ministry of Defense — a step up from the

unarmored pick-up trucks they were using.

Whether through logistics convoys, patrolling the streets or interacting with local residents, Iraqi soldiers here are on the path to success in this remote region of western Al Anbar Province.

“If the (Iraqi) battalion continues to do this well, there is no reason why they should not own this battle space by the end of the year,” said White, a 38-year-old from Seymour, Conn.



CPL. ANTONIO ROSAS
An Iraqi Army soldier keeps a keen eye on his surroundings while on an Iraqi soldier-led patrol through Ubaydi, Iraq, March 23, in western Al Anbar province.



SPORT SHORTS

INTRAMURAL
SOFTBALL

The Commanding General's Intramural Softball season is about to begin and teams are looking for players. Regular season will start April 25. Games are Tuesday and Thursday nights and open to all base personnel. Call Randy Husted 830-4092 to get in contact with a coach.

LEISURE

FIRST ANNUAL WOOD
AND CRAFT FAIR

Marine Corps Community Services is hosting the First Annual Wood and Craft Fair April 22. The event is for MCAGCC patrons to show and sell their homemade crafts and wood-working projects. The day will also include prize giveaways, craft contests and a variety of craft and wood-working demonstrations. There is no fee for opening a booth at the fair. If you are interested in selling and displaying your homemade crafts, and would like to have a booth at the fair please call 830-7214. This event is sponsored by The Home Depot.

TOASTMASTER CLUB
MEETING

Toastmasters Club 2793 will meet at the Village Center, Bldg 1551 in the classroom on April 26 from 1145 to 1245. The classroom is located just inside the door to the left. All visitors are invited and welcomed to attend. Come join us in learning communications through public speaking and leadership. The point of contact is Donna Bullen. She can be reached at 830-6533 or call Perry Ford at 830-4950.

ARTS AND CRAFTS
ROUND-UP

Annual Chaparral Artists will hold an "Arts and Crafts Round-Up," May 6 from 9 a.m. to 3 p.m. at the Joshua Tree Community Center located at 6171 Sunburst Rd. For more information or if you would like to be a vender call Julia at 365-6236.

WE SALUTE YOU
CELEBRATION

Marine Corps Community Services is hosting the We Salute You Celebration on May 20 from 4 to 10 p.m. at Victory Field. The event is free and will include BBQ, games, with a concert featuring the Combat Center Band and Lynyrd Skynyrd. The event is open to all eligible patrons. No outside alcohol, pets or audio, video or flash photography.

Did You Know?

More Americans have died in car accidents than have died in all wars fought by the United States.



Brian M. Gryn, right, Marine Corps Communication-Electronics School, slams the ball past Clayton Dooley, Headquarters Battalion, in the championship game.

MCCES seizes volleyball intramural title

CPL. BRIAN A. TUTHILL
COMBAT CORRESPONDENT

The final high-flying, ball-spiking chapter of the Commanding General's Intramural Volleyball League season came to a close April 12, as teams competed for the season crown at the West Gym.

Four teams went head-to-head for the finals but it was the powerhouse team from the Marine Corps Communication-Electronics School who took the title after playing Headquarters Battalion.

The tournament was split into a series of four games, with HQBN taking on MCCES first, 1st Tank Battalion battled the Provost Marshal's Office second, followed by Tanks versus HQBN and the final HQBN and MCCES match up for the season title.

"I want to thank all five of our teams who played, we truly had some great competition out here this season," said Randy Husted, Marine Corps Community Services Sports coordinator. "I think we had the best two teams out here playing in this championship."

The game also featured three players who will go on to compete for slots on the All-Marine volleyball team. They were Cindiemarie Blair, Headquarters Battalion; Clayton Dooley, Marine Unmanned Aerial Vehicle Squadron 1 playing for HQBN; and Brian Gryn of MCCES.

The first game seemed to be over before it started as MCCES took a 25-18 win over HQBN in the first match. Back on the court after a minute's break, HQBN quickly took a 5-4 lead, but MCCES answered that challenge, bringing the score to 9-6. Even though HQBN led, 19-17, MCCES countered and finished, 25-20, at the end of the set.

Both teams left the court as others prepared to play, but MCCES would be on the sidelines until the

other games had concluded as they had already secured their spot for the championship.

Tanks, who won the season title last year, took the court against PMO in the night's second match, with Tanks victories in each game. Tanks finished with nearly double PMO's score for this match, 25-16, in the first game and 25-10 after establishing an early lead in the second.

Because Tanks lost to MCCES the previous night, they would face HQBN in the losers' bracket to see which team would go on to face MCCES.

The two competitors both knew this was one of their last chances to pull through to the finals, and the fierce battle began with Tanks leading throughout the entire first game until HQBN tied it up, 24-24. An overzealous serve by HQBN gave Tanks the first win, 26-24, but HQBN began to shine through as they pulled ahead, 12-8, in the second game.

A decisive third match began after HQBN won the second game, 25-13, and gained a 12-6 lead in the third. Although Tanks trailed with nine points, the shorter 15-point round was won by HQBN, who advanced into the finals with MCCES.

"I didn't like the two-game break between our games," said Eric Aisoff, MCCES head coach. "We were able to warm up when we got back out there, though, and we played our game well. We were looking forward to playing Headquarters because they are a very good team. Tanks also had a great season, and they are very competitive."

MCCES quickly established dominance in the big game as they delivered a solid first three points before HQBN scored. A number of spike attempts were blocked by MCCES defenders, who had only suffered one loss throughout the entire season. MCCES was able to maintain their lead until they scored their 25th and final point of the first game.

"We made a lot of little errors this first game, but

I think we can make up for it this second game," said Jesse Silvas, a Headquarters Battalion player. "If we can do that I feel we can take the third one, too. They are certainly the team to beat, and we know we can beat them."

Although most of HQBN players maintained that same positive outlook, MCCES slammed 10 balls to the floor before HQBN could get one on the board. MCCES waited as HQBN conferred during a timeout, and then scored two more before they saw any HQBN opposition.

HQBN trailed far behind as MCCES led with three times their score at 21-7.

Despite the deficit, HQBN had their chance for comeback as MCCES' game point sailed into the net and put the ball back in their hands. However, it was not enough, and MCCES finished victoriously, 25-14, and were crowned the kings of the court in a small ceremony.

"The game went smooth, and we played well," said Aisoff. "We had a lot of experience on the team this year, and it definitely helped us. I have six players who are either former all-Marine, about to be all-Marine or are at the level of all-Marine. There is a lot of great talent on the team.

"I said earlier this season that we'd go undefeated, so I ate my words because Tanks beat us," Aisoff said. "But we went undefeated through the playoffs, and that's what counts."

Although Aisoff said his current players are skilled, next year is still uncertain as players transfer in and out of the school and others change duty stations.

"It's hard to say what's going to come for us next season, a few of our players are students, so some are going to leave," he said. "I hope we can have more players step up, but we will have a few return."



Jonell D. Kosa, Headquarters Battalion, returns a volley while playing their first game against the Marine Corps Communication-Electronics School.



Daniel Valdes kisses the team trophy after MCCES won the season title.

HEAT CONDITIONS FLAG COLORS

GREEN
80° – 84.9°*

Exercise can be conducted and discretion is required for all heavy exercise unless acclimatized to desert conditions.

Strenuous exercise must be halted or reduced for Marines and Sailors who haven't had up to 12 weeks to acclimatize.

YELLOW
85° – 87.9°*

Strenuous exercise and activity must be reduced for new, unacclimatized personnel during the first three weeks of heat exposure. Avoid outside classes.

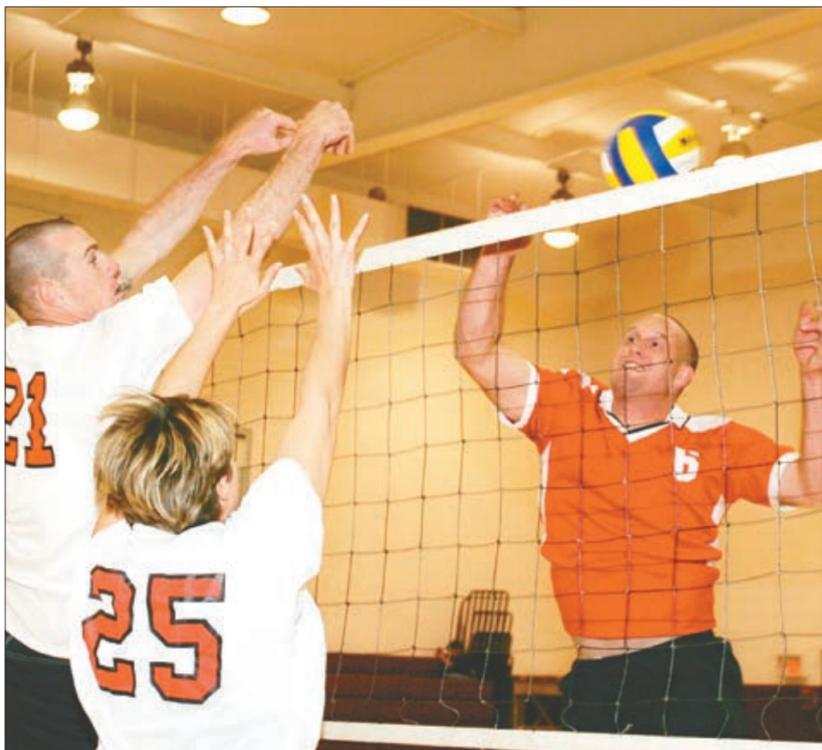
All outdoor activities and training must be suspended. Weather conditions are too dangerous for exercise or movement outside.

RED
88° – 89.9°*

BLACK
90°* – ABOVE

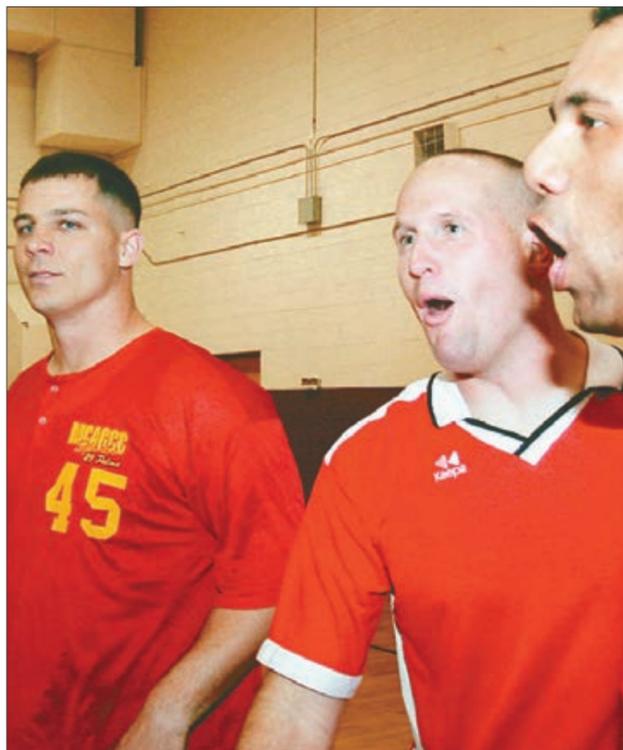
*According to the Wet Bulb Globe Temperature index

Three Combat Center Marines advance to all-Marine volleyball tryouts



CPL. BRIAN A. TUTHILL

Brian Gryn, MCCES, attempts to block a shot by Clayton Dooley, who is assisted by Jonell D. Kosa, Headquarters Battalion in the championship game. Both Gryn and Dooley were selected to attend the All-Marine team tryouts.



CPL. BRIAN A. TUTHILL

Brian Gryn celebrates with his fellow Marine Corps Communication-Electronics School teammates after winning the 2006 intramural championship April 12.

CPL. BRIAN A. TUTHILL

COMBAT CORRESPONDENT

The intramural volleyball season came to a close April 12, but for three outstanding players, the competition has just begun as they try to go "All-Marine".

These Marine athletes left Saturday to attend three weeks of training camp at Marine Corps Air Station Cherry Point, N.C.

They were Brian Gryn, a former All-Marine player and instructor with Alpha Company, Marine Corps Communication-Electronics School, Cindiemarie Blair, Headquarters Battalion, Staff Judge Advocate's office, and Clayton Dooley of Marine Unmanned Aerial Vehicle Squadron 1.

"It's a great opportunity for the Marines to go on to further competition and go against other services and other Marines," said Randy Husted, the volleyball coordinator for Marine Corps Community Services Sports. "One aspect of All-Marine volleyball that has been missing recently is the height of the players and we have that this year. Clayton Dooley is 6'6" and Brian Gryn is about 6'4", so they will be a good addition."

This year's selection process did not reflect that of previous years because of deployment schedules and other factors, said Husted. There were no regional play-offs so all prospective players were selected based on resumes submitted to Headquarters Marine Corps.

"There were three of us selected to go, and it feels great," said Gryn, 30, who formerly played for the All-Marine Volleyball Team in 1997, 1999 and 2002. "I didn't really think about it too much this year because the green machine that is MCCES kind of keeps you from getting away. I'm thankful that my command gave me this opportunity. I have not gone since 2002, and I'm really looking forward to getting back out there."

Gryn said he expects the competition at the training camp to be tough, but also to be a good experience for everyone.

"I was really pleased with the season here," said Gryn, a Hadley, Mich., native, who has been playing volleyball since he first came to MCCES as a student in 1995. "There was some really good competition all around and that's really what helped to elevate the game. I know I would not have gotten the experience I needed this season if it was not as competitive."

"I also hope to meet some of the other Marines and get reacquainted with other players I know from the past," Gryn added.

Twelve Marines will be selected from the 22 total players at the All-Marine training camp and will go on to face teams of the other services at Fort Huachuca, Ariz., June 8-19.

After facing other U.S. teams, hand-picked Marines selected from the All-Marine Team will join the All-Armed Services Team, who boasts some of the best players from around the country, to compete against other military teams from around the world in the 27th annual event.

Although Gryn is one of the most talked-about players coming from Twentynine Palms, Husted said that newcomer Dooley could be a strong driving force for the team.

"Dooley is probably going to be one of the best players out there," Husted said. "He really dominated our league, and I have no doubt he'll do well there."

"I know our Twentynine Palms players are going to be a good asset to the All-Marine Team," he said.

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GUNNERY SGT. CHRIS W. COX

"SPRINT-GATHER-SPRINT" was the technique the most experienced Easter Egg hunters taught the newbies Saturday.

GUNNERY SGT. CHRIS W. COX

PUBLIC AFFAIRS CHIEF

If you didn't wear sunblock to the 2006 Easter Egg Hunt at Felix Field Saturday, you're wearing tan-lines now.



GUNNERY SGT. CHRIS W. COX

Chaplain Catherine Pace prays to be released from her wet penance for taunting folks passing by Saturday's dunk tank.

Not to say that the weather was unbearably hot. Thanks to shade tents, a nice breeze and temperatures in the low 70's, hundreds of egg-hunters and their parents had a memorable and highly entertaining time. In fact, the evolution's success went so far beyond any expectations that may have come up after taking a look at last year's plan and after action report, one might almost call it miraculous.

"To begin with, there was no LOI for this on record that we could find. So we started from scratch in that area," said Chaplain Karen Rector, this year's Easter Egg Hunt coordinator. The letter of instruction from last year's event would have given her an idea of what was needed — like power, water and trash bags, who can provide it and even how to begin putting this complicated event together. But for Rector, who is currently serving her first tour as a Chaplain of Marines, organizing this event was a do it yourself, learn-as-you-go nightmare.

"It was a little hard, being that this was my first major event like this," she explained.

"A little hard" is an understatement. In spite of her blank-slate start, never having organized an event of this magnitude, and only a month of coordination, here was the end-result:

- A free barbecue for 500 (that the crowd almost finished before the day was done),
- A few volunteers and a fellow chaplain dunked in the dunk tank by well-aimed softball throws from passers-by,
- An inflatable bounce-house that the kids could not get enough of, and



GUNNERY SGT. CHRIS W. COX

Danny Morey and Randy Reyes Sr., dish up hot dogs to go with the barbecue, side dishes and drinks provided by members of the Calvary Chapel Conference Center in Murrieta, Calif.

- 2,000 eggs — all found.

It's been great," said Toinette Ishee, mother of 11-year-old Ajala; Zachary, 5; and Brenton, 2. "They had fun activities, and the food was great. They really enjoyed it."

The Ishee family came to the Easter Egg hunt as a way to interact with their neighbors and take part in an annual tradition. Only this time, it was without husband and father, Patrick, who deployed to Iraq in February with Combat Logistics Battalion 7.

"With the Marines coming and going, it gives us an opportunity to get out and do things with one another, like this event right here," she said about the community interaction she witnessed and took part in Saturday afternoon. With all of the children playing together, and their parents having at least two things to begin talking about — work and kids, the egg-hunt/cook-out looked more like a block party with several hundred friends and neighbors rather than a mob of strangers at the park.

Still, for many of those families, it was also one more milestone that a husband or wife could not be a part of.

"We'd rather have the whole family together," Ishee said. "He gets to miss some of the stuff they do, like the Easter Egg hunt and having to miss Easter with us tomorrow."

In spite of their separation from Patrick, however, Toinette and her kids are not alone. The next night, they shared Easter dinner with a friend and neighbor whose husband is also deployed. As a result, the Ishee family — minus one husband and dad — still had a memorable Easter weekend.

So, how does a first-time Easter Egg Hunt coordinator top an entertainment standard that has been set so high?

"Next year, twice as many eggs," Rector said.



GUNNERY SGT. CHRIS W. COX

Joshua Hill and Dylan Edmiston get bunny hugs before racing out to collect eggs at Felix Field Saturday.

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SGT. ROBERT L. FISHER III

Staff Sgt. Sherry Williams, Marksmanship Training Unit, along with other soon-to-be moms, fill their plates with free refreshments at the Mothers-to-be High Tea at the Marine Corps Exchange Tuesday.

SGT. ROBERT L. FISHER III

COMBAT CORRESPONDENT

Combat Center mothers-to-be joined together to make new friends and enjoy free refreshments at the Mothers-to-be High Tea at the Marine Corps Exchange April 14.

"The importance of a high tea is bringing our mothers-to-be together," said Ron Arden, Marine Corps Exchange Merchandise manager. "It gave our pregnant wives, many who have husbands that are deployed, a social event and some fun in their afternoon. We had a small crowd. Whoever was there learned a lot and that's what's important."

Lt. j.g. Michael J. Mero, a registered dietician with the Robert E. Bush Naval Hospital, along with Lt. Randi Heninger, a representative from the obstetrics and gynecology clinic, spoke to the soon-to-be-mothers about prenatal concerns and proper dieting during pregnancy.

Many of the women who attended were pregnant with their first child.

"I'm nervous since this is

my first," said Misty Gill, wife of Lance Cpl. Jerred Gill, Marksmanship Training Unit. "I had a lot of questions answered. It's better than going to the hospital just to ask these questions."

Staff Sgt. Sherry Williams, MTU, was carrying her second child, but she still attended the high tea to learn more about her current pregnancy.

"I wanted to find out information," said Williams about why she came. "Yes, this is my second child, but there is so much information that I did gain from it. It was very informative. And as much as you think you know everything, you really, really don't. Every pregnancy is different."

After the guest speakers finished their presentations and all of the prizes were handed out, many of the mothers-to-be stayed a little longer to dine on the free refreshments and network with newfound friends.

According to Arden, the high tea gave them, "some entertainment and some education, which is so very important when you are expecting... and a pleasant afternoon."

The High Tea offered mothers-to-be a chance to escape for a while, to meet other soon-to-be-moms and learn some things about their pregnancy and what to expect when expecting.