

Serving the MCAGCC
Community at
Twentynine Palms, Calif.

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June 9, 2006



BRASS RECYCLING, A7

OBSERVATION POST



SOCCE, B3

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THIS ISSUE

A5 - Iraqi roleplayers

A6 - 3/11 Sgt. Major

B1 - Soapbox Derby

HOT TOPICS

BLOOD DRIVE AT NAVAL HOSPITAL

The next Base blood drive is scheduled for Saturday, July 8, from 10 a.m. to 2 p.m., in Classroom 4 of the Naval Hospital.

RECRUITER SCREENING

Headquarters Marine Corps Recruiters screening team will visit the Combat Center on June 22 at the Protestant Chapel to screen pre-designated enlisted Marines for potential future assignment on recruiting duty. Corporals and above who are not on the pre-designated HRST list may volunteer for the HRST screening. They must contact their unit Career Retention Specialist and complete the necessary paperwork ahead of time. All Marines who will be screened have to be at the Protestant Chapel at 7:45 a.m. For more information, contact The Base CRS, GySgt Whitaker at 830-6171 or your unit CRS.

SECURITY GUARD SCREENING

Headquarters Marine Corps Marine Security Guard screening team will visit the Combat Center on June 30 at the Catholic Chapel to screen enlisted Marines for potential future assignment on Marine Security Guard Duty. The MSG briefs will be provided to all interested Marines to explain pertinent information relating to their career when they are assigned a tour of duty as a Marine Security Guard. All Marines who will be screened have to be at the Catholic Chapel at 7:45 a.m. For more information, contact The Base CRS, GySgt Whitaker at 830-6171 or your unit CRS.

RED CROSS CPR & FIRST AID CLASSES

The 29 Palms Red Cross is offering an Adult, Child and Infant CPR and First Aid Class June 24, 8 a.m. to 6 p.m. in the Village Center (Bldg 1551). Cost is \$48. For more information and to register for class, please call 830-6685.

COMING NEXT ISSUE

• 29 Palm trees

• Bronze Star

• 3/11 Change of Command

THIS DAY IN MARINE CORPS HISTORY

June 9, 1898

The First Marine Battalion made final preparations to invade Guantanamo Bay, Cuba.

Marine competes against Iron Chef



Iron Chef Bobby Flay grills during a competition at Camp Wilson for his new show, "Throwdown with Bobby Flay."



Capt. Eric P. Dominijanni, 2nd Assault Amphibian Battalion, out of Camp Lejeune, N.C., grills his famous steaks.

CPL. HEIDI E. LOREDO

COMBAT CORRESPONDENT

Captain Eric P. Dominijanni thought his dream came true when the Food Network chose to profile him for a network special.

Dominijanni, with 2nd Assault Amphibian Battalion, out of Camp Lejeune, N.C., competed in the "Command of the Grill" competition in New York on May 25 against nine other champions from Marine bases.

Dominijanni, known for cooking paella for his troops while deployed to Iraq, was at Camp Wilson when staff from the Food Network arrived on scene to witness his chef skills in the desert. The Queens, N.Y., native was followed by camera crews on June 2, as he spoke passionately about cooking.

"I love watching cooking shows," Dominijanni told the camera crew. "I've been watching those shows my whole life. But cooking itself is an art to me, and I find it to be something where I can put all of my emotion and all of my feelings into my creation."

The following morning, Dominijanni, who began cooking at the age of 7, prepared his marinades for chicken, pork tenderloin, ribs and steak

while cameras rolled. The crew filmed as an unsuspecting Dominijanni prepared a feast fit for kings, or his Marines.

Later during the festivities while Dominijanni flipped his steaks on the grill, a humvee pulled up to the grill site. Much to his surprise, world renowned chef, Bobby Flay, stepped out of the vehicle.

"I heard about your famous steaks and I decided to come check them out for myself," said Flay. "I'm here to challenge you to a throw down in an unexpected cook-off of your specialty, right here, right now."

Dominijanni, still shocked, accepted the offer from the Iron Chef.

The competition, "Throwdown with Bobby Flay," was part of a new series starring one of Food Network's most popular personalities. Chef Flay is on a secret mission to challenge the best of the best in different areas of food. In each episode, Flay surprises one of the country's top amateur cooks and challenges him or her to a culinary throw down, cooking their specialty, on their turf.

"When I saw him get out of that humvee I was in shock. I couldn't ask for anything better," said an excited Dominijanni. "He has no clue how appreciative I am of him being here. If I could, I'd do back flips. This is amazing...in Twentynine Palms.

Flay surprised the crowd when he unloaded his own grills, kitchen equipment and staff to assist him.

"Hey Bobby, you think you can cook in this heat," yelled out a Marine from the crowd that gathered.

"I don't know," said Flay smiling. "And I've never competed against someone who had the entire Marine Corps behind him."

The sizzling desert heat and unknown territory didn't deter Flay from grilling porterhouse steaks and Portobello mushrooms for the competition and the Marines.

With his Marines supporting him, Dominijanni presented Flay with a premier "Disco's Hot and Tangy" steak, branded with the letter "D."

Chef Jamie Purviance judged the competition and ultimately Dominijanni won the best taste. His Marines were more than happy to taste test Flay's creations, but in the end, the Marines banded together and sided with Dominijanni.

"Behind me are 30 Marines who possibly are stronger than everyone here," joked Dominijanni. "I had a good feeling I was going to win. Pros and cons reflect."

"As long as you keep feeding your guys this food, I know our country is safe," said Flay.

1/6 wraps up Mojave Viper with a 3-day war

LANCE CPL. MICHAEL S. CIFUENTES

COMBAT CORRESPONDENT

"Marines, we just got intel [intelligence] on a house with a big weapons cache," said Sgt. Joshua C. Hudson, 1st Squad leader with 3rd Platoon, Bravo Company, 1st Battalion, 6th Marine Regiment. "A UAV [unmanned aerial vehicle] spotted several people coming in and out of the house. We are going in there to check it out."

"If there are any IEDs [improvised explosive devices], we're going to call it in to EOD [explosive ordnance disposal]," he continued. "Our QRF [quick reaction force] will take any detainees. They say there are at least eight weapons and we need to find them."

"Our purpose, however, is to meet and greet the civilians out there," said Hudson. "We're not going to bring a 'terp' [interpreter] because we won't need any right now. We have enough common courtesy to interact with the civilians, whether they are bad or innocent. So, we need to be nice. We need to treat them with respect because we're in their home."

Since May 3, 1/6 executed a month-long training evolution aboard the Combat Center dubbed Mojave Viper. The Marines underwent a series of classes on tactics and what to expect during their deployment, a combination of the revised combined arms exercises and the security and stability operations at the Combat Center's Range 215.

As the training came to an end, the battalion began their "Three Block War" Monday, which is a three-day field exercise aboard Range 215 involving Iraqi role players and scenarios the Marines could encounter during their upcoming deployment.

The battalion patrolled through the range, also called Wadi al Sahara, and met with the city's role-playing inhabitants in person.



LANCE CPL. MICHAEL S. CIFUENTES

Sgt. Joshua C. Hudson, a squad leader with 1st Squad, 3rd Platoon, Bravo Company, 1st Battalion, 6th Marine Regiment, directs members from his squad toward certain areas aboard the Combat Center's Range 215 Monday.

See 1/6, A4



SEATBELTS, SAILORS AND MARINES

It doesn't take fancy charts, gritty crash videos, or endless training sessions to learn that seatbelts save lives. Everyone knows they will help prevent serious injuries or deaths in crashes, but why do so many people still refuse or forget to wear them?

A recent example involved two Sailors in Virginia Beach, Va., as they were driving in excess of 100 mph when the driver lost control of the vehicle. The car rolled several times, ejecting the passenger—a petty officer third class. The belted driver survived the crash and left the scene. The PO3 died along the side of the road after being ejected because he wasn't wearing a seatbelt.

In San Bernardino County, Calif., two Marines were returning to base after a night in Las Vegas. Their vehicle drifted into the northbound lanes. Realizing this, the driver yanked the steering wheel and hit the brakes. That overreaction sent the car out of control. It left the road, skidded into the desert, and flipped several times. One of the Marines was ejected and died.

DoD policy states that military members are required to wear seatbelts on or off base, even in states that may not require them or don't have a primary offense law for seatbelts. That means Sailors and Marines must wear them...period. To not do so, in effect, is a violation of lawful direct orders.

But Sailors and Marines should wear them for other reasons: to make sure they live to see children walk, to enjoy family gatherings, to share special moments with loved ones, and to enjoy the freedoms they fight for. They should do it because it's the right thing to do. Some people think that seatbelts are confining, but how confining is a wheelchair or worse...a coffin?

SEAT BELT FACTS:

- Nationwide 31,693 deaths occurred involving motor vehicles in 2004, 55% of those killed were not wearing SEAT BELTS.
- Child restraints saved 451 children in 2004. Seatbelts saved 15,434 people and airbags and additional 2,647 lives during the same period.
- 48 million Americans still do not buckle up, the biggest offenders of not buckling up are young males (18-28), living in rural areas or driving pick ups.
- From 2002 to 2004, 378 Sailors and Marines died in motor vehicle accidents. 51% were not wearing seat belts.

Sempertoons

By Gunnery Sgt. Charles Wolf

SemperToons SAFETY Presents: "Safety is about more than just you"

SEMPERTOONS.COM

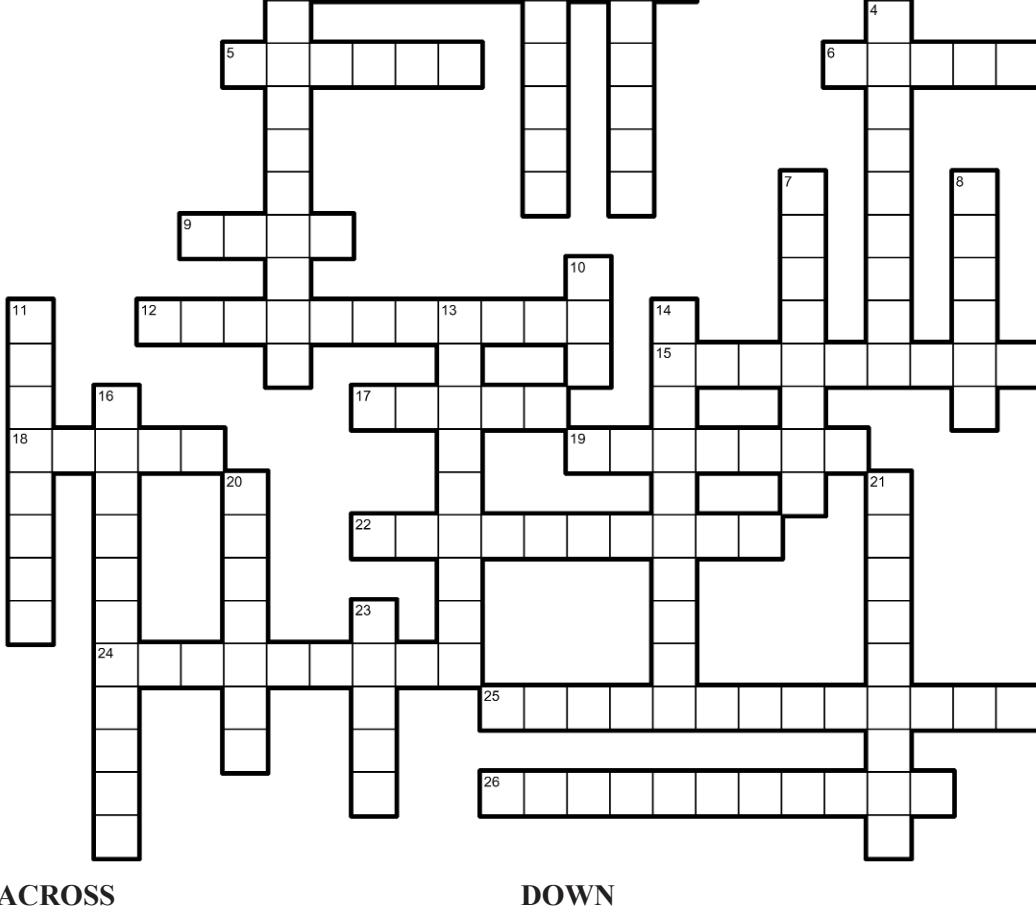
YOUR FAMILY

Mom - Dad - Brother - Sister - Son -
Daughter Nephew - Niece - Cousin
Grandson Granddaughter - Son -
Husband Wife - Grandmother -
Aunt Uncle - Grandfather -
Cousin Your Family Pet -
Husband Grandson
Niece Pvt - PFC - LCpl
Company CO Fellow Marines - SgtMaj
America - CMC -
Cpl - Sgt - SSgt -
- The Gunny - Msgt -
- Co.1sgt
Friends THE CORPS



At least 10 other people are effected by your Safety actions everyday
- Your family and Corps depend on you -

FIELD GEAR



ACROSS

- 1 Used with a red lens.
5 Rifle or pistol
6 Worn under footware. Usually pack extra
9 First aid medical kit
12 Toiletry items
15 Camouflaged blouse and trousers
17 Small, portable shovel
18 Protective footware. Usually pack extra
19 Identification worn around neck at all times
22 Small, camouflaged backpack used for patrolling
24 Water container that straps to your back
25 Kills germs and bacteria on hands
26 Protective vest

DOWN

- 1 Source of communication
2 A soft surface to sleep on
3 Item that covers and protects your head
4 Snacks
7 Protects ears from loud noises that cause damage.
8 Off-road, four-passenger vehicle
10 Preserved prepared meals
11 Lotion that protects the skin from the sun
13 Chemiluminescent stick
14 Protective shaded eyewear
16 Soft hat with a brim all around
20 Green water container
21 Tissues used for field showers
23 Detachable bayonet

[Solutions on A7]

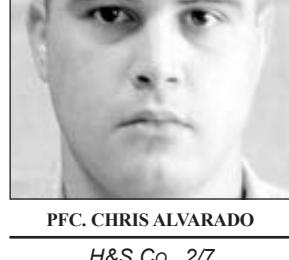
MCAGCC MARINE CORPS AIR GROUND COMBAT CENTER	ARRIVE ALIVE A Combat Center Car Company 367-7433 Top's Taxi 361-6748	Signature Driver Customer Date/Time Total fee Destination Pick up at Name ID #
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Maine Sailors and cab drivers
MCAGCC will reimburse ANY 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 ID card.
Thank you for participating.

Centerspeak

"What do you think the Marine Corps can do to help reinforce core values?"

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



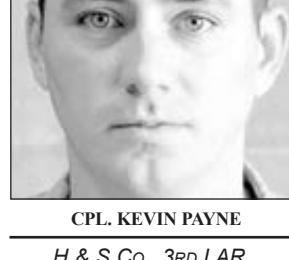
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H & S Co., 2/7



LANCE CPL. EMILY CLAY

CENTER PERSONNEL, HQBN



CPL. KEVIN PAYNE

H & S Co., 3RD LAR



SGT. JOSEPH JOHNSON

TTECG, HQBN

What's on your mind?

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

Address submissions to:

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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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Commandant 'gravely concerned' over alleged misconduct in Iraq

GERRY J. GILMORE
AMERICAN FORCES PRESS SERVICE

WASHINGTON, D.C. — The Marine Corps will get to the bottom of allegations that some of its members wrongly killed a number of civilians during two separate operations in Iraq, the organization's commandant told reporters here Wednesday.

At a Pentagon news briefing, Gen. Michael W. Hagee said he couldn't comment on specifics regarding ongoing investigations centering on events surrounding alleged Marine misconduct that took place at Haditha, Iraq, on Nov. 19, 2005, and other alleged misconduct that took place April 26 this year in Hamdaniya, Iraq.

News reports have said at least 15 civilians were killed during the alleged incident at Haditha, while one Iraqi was allegedly killed in Hamdaniya.

"As commandant, I am gravely concerned about the serious allegations concerning actions of some Marines at Haditha and Hamdaniya," Hagee told reporters. "I can assure you that the Marine Corps takes them seriously."

The Marine Corps is committed to fully support the investigations of both incidents, the general said. "We want to ensure the investigations are complete with respect to what actually happened on the ground and actions taken or not taken by the chain of command," Hagee said.



Gen. Michael Hagee, Commandant, U.S. Marine Corps, briefs the press on his recent trip to Iraq in the Pentagon briefing room on June 7. HELENE C. STIKKEL

Hagee recently returned to Washington after visiting with Marines and soldiers serving in Iraq.

"I can tell you that their morale is really quite high. The operational tempo is also high. They are very proud in what they're doing. They know they're well-equipped, they know

they are well-trained, and they know that they are making a difference," the general said.

Hagee said he couldn't discuss specifics of the investigations until they're complete. However, he confirmed that three Marine officers, a battalion commander and two company commanders, have been relieved of duty.

"We intend to keep you informed to the fullest extent possible without interfering with the legal process," Hagee told reporters.

Marines are trained to perform their duties to the highest professional and ethical standards, Hagee said, noting that thousands of Marines have performed superbly on the dangerous, complex and stressful battlefields in Afghanistan and Iraq.

However, if any Marines are found to have broken the law and their services' ethos, then they will be held accountable, Hagee said, regardless of rank or position.

"While I am concerned about the current allegations, I am confident that the American people recognize that Marines are men and women of the highest caliber," Hagee said. During more than 230 years of Marine Corps' history, its members have "acquitted themselves with honor, dedication and dignity in some of the most difficult and dangerous environments imaginable," Hagee said.

"We don't intend to change," he said.

Technology advances affect reporting emergencies

DARLENE HULL

ASSISTANT FIRE CHIEF

You've already been advised that cellular phone reporting can be complex but, now it's time to make you aware that broadband and internet phones do not process 9-1-1 calls in the same way as traditional wired phones. In fact, the Fire Department discovered recently that multiple 9-1-1 calls were repeatedly dropped by one of the top broadband phone services during an attempt to transfer the call back to the local emergency dispatch center.

Phone services have come a long way over recent years. In fact, most areas of the country now have reliable 9-1-1 emergency reporting available to traditional wired phone customers. But, with technology evolving at such a rapid rate, now there are several types of phone services a person can choose from and, as a result, it has become more important than ever to understand how to effectively report an emergency from some of the newer services out there. Below are some important ways to ensure your 9-1-1 call will go to the right dispatch center, no matter what service you are calling from.

First, there are at least three distinctly different phone services available to the average customer. There is the traditional wired phone that has been around for generations, the cellular phone, and now broadband or internet phones that are avail-

able though your computer. Although the preferred method of reporting an emergency is by calling 9-1-1 from a hard wired phone, reporting emergencies can be successful from any of the services already mentioned. As a customer of ANY phone service provider it is important to understand there are variations in how 9-1-1 calls are handled and to find out the best way to report an emergency BEFORE the need arises.

Calling 9-1-1 from a traditional wired phone service is pretty straightforward and reliable (unless the power is out and your phone is dependant on electricity). You make the call, the dispatcher gets a read out that includes the address and phone number you are calling from, you report the emergency, answer some questions, and help is on the way. If you want to make sure that you can report an emergency during a power outage you need to have a phone that plugs directly into a wall outlet and does not rely on an electrical outlet to operate. Many homes rely solely on cordless phones or phones that integrate answering machines into them, both require electricity to operate and fail during power outages.

With a cell phone it is still fairly simple to report an emergency locally. Your 9-1-1 call, however, is sent out of the area to either Victorville or Indio and must be routed back to the emergency dispatch center closest to you. So, with a cell phone

your ability to clearly communicate your location becomes vital as does the dispatcher's ability to determine where to route the call. *The fastest and most direct way to report emergencies in progress at MCAGCC is by calling one of the 24 hour, dedicated emergency lines at 830-3333 or 830-3334 — PLEASE, take the time to program your phone when your hands aren't shaking from the adrenaline of a true emergency.*

And finally, there is the next generation of phone service mentioned above, broadband or internet phone service, dependant on not only electricity but also the communication line supporting the service. The reliability of reporting emergencies through broadband or internet phones can be affected not only by power outages and the reliability of the communication line, but is also dependant on your commitment to register your equipment and keep your personal information updated with the provider. Be advised, 9-1-1 calls from these types of services don't go directly to your nearest emergency dispatch center, they go to the service provider where the information you provide is then cross referenced to determine the closest emergency dispatch center — and only then is your call transferred. Also, as with cell phones, you can report an emergency at MCAGCC with broadband or internet service by calling the 24 hour dedicated emergency lines at 830-3333 or 830-3334.



LANCE CPL. MICHAEL S. CIFUENTES

Lance Cpl. Michael J. Howard, a team leader with 1st Squad, 3rd Platoon, Bravo Company, 1st Battalion, 6th Marine Regiment, shows a card containing high valued personnel, wanted by the Marines of 1/6, to a Range 215 role player.

1/6, A1

Their mission was to simulate a city battle and provide security from any terrorist activity, declare a known presence to all inhabitants and interact with the population in positive ways to assure them the Marine presence was for their security.

Squads from the battalion encountered many active role-players from the city. Most role players complied with the Marines' needs of searching in and around their homes, but some were suspect, preparing for their simulated attacks on the Marines.

The Marines expressed gestures of comfort to the role players, and interacted with them as they patrolled their streets and alleyways. With the help of interpreters, the Marines spoke their language to assure them they are in their city for a good cause. Hand-shaking was common in the conversations the Marines held with the role players.

During the patrols, some squads found indications terrorists were among the civilians who lived in the city and suspicions arose on the first day of the three-day exercise.

During nightfall of the first night, the battalion encountered the aggressors in several areas of the city. Weapons caches and IEDs were found and turned in. Detainees were taken in to the forward operating base of 1/6 for questioning.

The battalion's mission of maintaining peace in the city of Wadi al Sahara was executed to the extent of their intent. Their forceful presence against the terrorist was made known after attacks on individual squads.

Hudson, a Tucson, Ariz., native, led his squad through the training evolution and the three-day war.

"The three-day [final exercise] put all of our lane training exercises into one," said Hudson. "It put into perspective what we will see out there. It brought out our weaknesses and throughout the exercise we developed a way to overcome them. We saw everything put to use; from EOD to the UAVs. The real-life scenarios gave us all the feeling that it was the real thing, just no rounds were flying at us."

Included in the three-day exercise was the blistering Twen-

tynine Palms heat. Some of the battalion members, who are stationed in Camp Lejeune, N.C., have not had the opportunity to acclimate to the desert weather until visiting the Combat Center for training.

"Aside being from Arizona, I've fought in Fallujah while it was 138 degrees," said Hudson. "The weather out here is something we cannot afford to let burden us. Yet, it is a good way to train some of the new Marines how to cope with the elements out there."

Lance Cpl. John W. Lindley, a rifleman with 1st Squad, 3rd Platoon, Bravo Company, has been with the unit since February. His experience of pre-deployment training has changed since he stepped on board the Combat Center, he said. With help from his leaders, Lindley feels his squad is ready for their upcoming deployment.

"My squad leader and team leaders were a really big help for us during our pre-deployment training package," said Lindley, a Wolcott, N.Y., native. "They've been sharing their knowledge with us to the best of their extent. They've been through the fight for Fallujah so they know, first hand, what we can expect out there and what we can do here to train for that."

Interacting with the role players during the three-day exercise has contributed to the confidence of the battalion members, said Lance Cpl. Michael J. Howard, a rifleman with 1st Squad, 3rd Platoon, Bravo Company.

"I feel confident that everyone knows what they're doing, and the role players are helping us understand what we're going to see," said Howard, a Daytona Beach, Fla., native. "A lot of the role players were actually helping us speak proper Arabic. They occasionally spoke in English — just a few words to help us understand and correct our usage of some Arabic phrases."

"The training has been very intense," added Howard. "I've been trying to make sure the Marines are prepared and confident in everything they do. There's never a dull moment. I keep telling myself that this training is worth it for when we get over there."

The Inspector General of the Marine Corps visits Combat Center

The Inspector General of the Marine Corps, Major General David F. Bice, recently visited the Combat Center. While here, he heard Request Mast issues and hosted a focus group of junior enlisted Marines. The purpose of the focus group was to provide an open forum for junior Marines to present quality of life issues and concerns without the fear of reprisal. The questions presented by these Marines and their respective answers are provided:

QUESTION: Why doesn't the Mess Hall allow Marines to take a piece of fruit or a container of yogurt with them when they leave the Mess Hall?

ANSWER (from I&L): There is no policy in place that prevents patrons from taking a piece of fruit or a single container of yogurt out of the Mess Hall. The policy is that a patron cannot take more than one of these items at a time. This is to prevent Marines from loading up on fruit during one meal and not returning to the Mess Hall for the next meal, thus depriving the Mess Hall contractor of credit for the missed meal. This ultimately would result in an increase in the Mess Hall contractor's plate cost and to the cost to the Marine Corps.

QUESTION: Why is fast food the only food that can be taken out vice main course food, which is healthier? (The question concerned providing Styrofoam plates so that instead of taking out fast food, Marines can have the option to take out Main Course food — which in the Marine's opinion is healthier).

ANSWER (from I&L): Main Course "take out" is not allowed due to health and sanitation risks. Many of the main course items must be held at the proper temperature before serving and consumed immediately after serving in order to reduce/eliminate the possibility of bacteria growth. Bacteria growth could lead to a food-borne illness.

In the past, Marines have received "take out" from the Main Course and allowed it to sit in a non-refrigerated area. This resulted in Marines getting sick and blaming the Mess Hall food for getting them sick without elaborating as to when they had picked up the meal, how they had stored it and when they actually ate the meal. Although the fast food items should also be consumed relatively quickly, there is less risk if they are left in a non-refrigerated area, since bacteria growth is not as prevalent. In addition, it would be cost prohibitive to provide the amount of Styrofoam plates needed to provide this service.

QUESTION: Why is the swimming pool going to be closed for Memorial Day weekend?

ANSWER (from MCCS): The swimming pool was open for the Memorial Day weekend as planned.

QUESTION: Why was the decision made to close the Condor Gate and not Ocotillo gate, or alternate the closure of the gates?

ANSWER (from PMO): During the month of May, there was a significant shortage of military police personnel. In order to meet the basic police and safety requirements for the Combat Center, operational commitments had to be closely scrutinized. The Condor Gate was selected for closure during that month because it is the least utilized Gate aboard the Combat Center.

Condor Gate is typically open from 6–9 a.m., Monday through Friday. It is primarily used by personnel accessing Condor Elementary School, and is closed completely during the summer months when school is out. In short, considering the limited daily hours of operation and the limited use of the gate, it was determined that closing the Condor Gate would be the least inconvenient action to the Combat Center.

QUESTION: Why aren't there enough seats for the Motorcycle Safety Courses and why is the wait to take the classes so long?

ANSWER (from Center Safety): The two Motorcycle Safety Courses available aboard the Combat Center, Beginning Rider and Experienced Rider, are offered through the Center Safety Office. The courses are provided by a contractor at no cost to the student. Similar classes are offered through most motorcycle dealerships and usually have a significantly shorter wait time but require a fee.

The Beginning Rider Course is offered twice a month for active duty service members. Due to the high demand for this class and class size being limited to six students by the Motorcycle Safety Foundation and the California Motorcycle Safety Program sponsor, the wait time can be as long as 90 days. Every attempt has been made to satisfy the demand for this course and the Center Safety Office has been exploring alternatives to help alleviate the long wait period.

Motorcycles and all required riding gear are furnished for this class, which is for new riders with little or no practical experience. The class is conducted over a two-day period (Saturday and Sunday) and consists of five hours of classroom and 10 hours of riding exercises. Pre-registration for this course is required at the Center Safety Office - Building 1447.

The Experienced Rider Course is offered to riders who currently own a motorcycle and have a state operator permit endorsed for motorcycles. A temporary permit is not considered an endorsement. This class is offered on the third Saturday of each month and consists of five hours of hands-on riding exercises. To enroll for this class, bring your motorcycle to the Center Safety Office for an inspection and review of your driver's license, insurance, registration and proof of Driver Improvement Course attendance (if under the age of 26). Demand for this course is not high, so the wait time seldom exceeds 30 days.

QUESTION: Why doesn't the City of Twentynine Palms allow national chain-type businesses (Target, Circuit City, etc.) into the community?

ANSWER (from PAO): The Twentynine Palms Chamber of Commerce has worked unsuccessfully to invite major food and merchandise outlets to the community. The reason for their failure is simple. National chain-type businesses do not view moving to Twentynine Palms as a solid business proposition at this time.



CPL. HEIDI E. LOREDO
Marine Corps Sergeant Major John L. Estrada visits with role players during a visit to the Combat Center in May.



CPL. HEIDI E. LOREDO
Range 215 role players interact with Lt. Gen. James F. Amos, II Marine Expeditionary Force commanding general and Marine Corps Installations-West Sergeant Major Wayne Bell, during a visit to the Combat Center in May.

Natives of Iraq help Marines survive

CPL. HEIDI E. LOREDO
COMBAT CORRESPONDENT

When the Persian Gulf War ended, nearly 110,000 Iraqi soldiers who were captured or surrendered were taken to camps in Saudi Arabia. Most were sent back to their country after Iraqi President Saddam Hussein issued amnesty to deserters. However, 13,000 of the soldiers refused to go home, fearing persecution by the regime.

An estimated 1,000 of those Iraqi soldiers captured by U.S. forces during the 1991 Persian Gulf War were resettled in cities across the United States.

Many of the former soldiers provided valuable services to U.S. forces in the aftermath of the war as being witnessed currently aboard the Combat Center ranges. Men such as foreign language specialist, Ali and Salaam, who asked not to be identified with their real name, are helping Marines and Sailors prepare for the realities they will encounter during their deployment to the Middle East. Now as part of the Mojave Viper training package, units are presented with facilities which resemble cities, role players and scenarios that closely replicate the environment to which they will deploy.

But the road for Ali and Salaam, both veterans of the Iraqi Republican Guard, was not smooth. Ali, born in Baghdad, came to the United States in 1992 and settled in Tennessee. Salaam, born in Babylon, followed one year later but settled in Arizona.

"In my early days, Iraq was very beautiful, very pretty life," said Ali, with a thick Arabic accent. "I didn't know anything different. There was no fear, until the Iraq-Iranian war start. This is when the misery started."

Ali was 16 years old when he was dismissed from high school to be drafted. He was placed within the ranks of the Iraqi Republican Guard.

"Life was very hard during Saddam's regime," said Ali. "I got tortured so many times. People did anything to avoid the war. I broke my own hand just so that I wouldn't have to go with the Army."

Ali said he purposely broke his hand twice to avoid the draft, but it was nothing in comparison to what many of his friends did. One Iraqi dug a hole in the ground, buried his hand which was holding a grenade and blew his hand off.

"They refuse to go and fight," said Ali. "I know Hussein was a dictator. I have no respect for him. He's a blood-thirsty man. A lot of my family was killed by him because they refused to listen or they refused to do the things he wanted us to do."

Ali fought in the Iran-Iraq war grudgingly and ultimately fought during the Gulf War.

"The 'Highway of Death' — I was in the middle of it," said Ali, pointing to his right calf. "I was wounded with shrapnel. I lost my two cousins there."

The Highway of Death refers to a road between Kuwait and Basra on which the retreating Iraqi army was allegedly attacked by American aircraft during the Gulf War, in February 1991.

"I was looking for Americans at the time to surrender myself, because I refused to go back to Iraq," said Ali. "Basically, I chose death because at that time you would die. There is no chance after that."

"Finally I found the Americans and surrendered, and literally this is when I celebrate my birthday," said Ali.

"Before that I never had a birthday."

The camp in Saudi Arabia is where Ali befriended Salaam.

"We've been friends for 16 years," said Salaam. "I was 26, he was going on 19. Here we are. We are old and still single. But we are here in

America, and we've been given a second chance."

Salaam was a registered nurse in Iraq when he was drafted into the Iraqi Republican Guard.

"I had no choice," said Salaam. "We all know the Republican Guard is very aggressive. They are the ones fighting on the front lines always."

"Did I agree why we went to war? No. Did I like it? No. Destruction was brutal to the people of Kuwait," he said.

Salaam knew if he would return to Iraq after the Gulf War he would be killed, but he went home anyway and hid.

"I didn't want to die," said Salaam. "I didn't want to die just because Saddam wanted to be a brutal dictator."

He made his way to Saudi Arabia to an internment camp, eventually being granted permission by the United Nations to find a home in America.

"I returned to my original work as a nurse," said Salaam.

"And I worked as a dishwasher," said Ali, poking fun at himself.

During their years here in the States, both Ali and Salaam traveled from base to base, including Fort Irwin, Fort Jackson and most recently the Combat Center, offering their assistance in this war on terror.

"We have a good life," said Salaam. "We look at the difference. We heard a lot about how we can help them help the country of Iraq. We feel we accomplish a lot by helping out this job. We can say we helped President Bush when he went against Saddam." Ali said they even traveled to the nation's capitol and lobbied in favor of the war.

Their feeling of accomplishment meant more to them when the infamous ruler they feared their entire lives was finally captured.

"I can't explain to you the feeling I felt," said Ali. "I cried like a little girl. I got drunk. I'm so happy. I throw

big party with my American friends. We could not believe through all those years of Saddam's torture we finally found him in a rat hole."

"I see him in the court and I ask myself, is that the person that killed millions? Is that the person who killed all those kids?" he continued.

Both feel their contributions to the Marines who train aboard the Combat Center are invaluable. Marines will learn from them because they fought side-by-side with the Iraqi army. They feel they know exactly what Saddam loyalists think as well as the foreign insurgents who plague their once beautiful country.

"We are happy. Thanks [to] God for everything," said Salaam. Thanks [to] God for the life we live. Thanks [to] God for the job we do. I think we are doing a lot. Hopefully the Marines will learn from us and hopefully it will help them when they go to Iraq. We try to bring them the closest picture before they go."



LANCE CPL. MICHAEL S. CIFUENTES

1st Sgt. Richard A. Schindler was appointed the sergeant major of 3rd Battalion, 11th Marine Regiment, June 1.



LANCE CPL. MICHAEL S. CIFUENTES

Former Sgt. Maj. Jan R. Miller holds up a shadow box presented to him by Lt. Col. Douglas H. Fairfield, commanding officer of 3/11, during 3/11's sergeant major relief, appointment and retirement ceremony.

3/11 parts with former battalion sergeant major

Welcomes 1st Sgt. Schindler

LANCE CPL. MICHAEL S. CIFUENTES

COMBAT CORRESPONDENT

Sgt. Maj. Jan R. Miller was relieved of his duty as sergeant major of 3rd Battalion, 11th Marine Regiment, by 1st Sgt. Richard A. Schindler, in a relief, appointment and retirement ceremony June 1 held on the commanding general's parade field.

The Marine Corps also recognized the end of a 23-year journey Miller embarked on while serving the Corps.

His honorable service began September 27, 1983, when he underwent recruit training at Marine Corps Recruit Depot San Diego. He enlisted to become a combat engineer, and graduated from his military occupational specialty school as an honor graduate. He was meritiously promoted to lance corporal in April 1984. His first duty station was in Okinawa, Japan, with Bravo Company, 3rd Combat Engineer Battalion.

Miller's service in the Corps took him to more than 12 duty stations. He deployed to Panama on three separate occasions and participated in Operation Desert Shield and Desert Storm. He was a drill instructor in MCRD San Diego from April 1992 to June 1995, where he left the drill field as a staff sergeant filling the billet of gunnery sergeant.

As a staff sergeant, Miller deployed to Guantanamo Bay, Cuba, as the minefield maintenance clearing chief for minefield clearing operations in June 1995 and cleared more than 10,000 live anti-tank and anti-personnel mines around the perimeter of the naval base.

Miller was selected for promotion to sergeant major in November 2003, and assumed the billet of 3/11's battalion sergeant major. He deployed with the battalion to Iraq in support of Operation Iraqi Freedom 2 as a provisional infantry battalion. He said he was proud to have ended his Marine Corps career with the Cannoncookers.

"I love the Marine Corps," said Miller, a Reseda, Calif., native. "I love everything the Marine Corps stands for. I'm not burned out; I'm just ready to do something different."

"Marines and Sailors, I don't care what they say at Camp Pendleton, you are the hardest working battalion in the Marine Corps," said Miller, as he faced the battalion during the ceremony. "I am proud to have served with these Marines. Every Marine and Sailor you see out there today either enlisted or reenlisted since this country's been at war. It's the young 18-, 19- and 20-year-olds that are the ones knocking down doors, and I'm glad to be a part of that."

Miller also expressed great gratitude to his parents, his wife, his children and all of his extended family for sharing the sacrifices he made with the Marine Corps. He is married to the former Kim Mihalovich, and has four children: an 18-year-old daughter, Lindsay; a 17-year-old son, Matthew; a 14-year-old son, Caleb; and a 12-year-old son Jacob.

"Without a doubt, he is the best sergeant major I ever had," said Schindler about Miller.

Schindler, a Great Bend, Kan., native, has been with 3/11 for more than two years as the battery first sergeant for Headquarters Battery. His enlistment began in 1987 after completing recruit training in MCRD San Diego. He enlisted as an infantry rifleman, and after completing School of Infantry, Camp Lejeune, N.C., he attended Marine Security Forces School in Iceland.

In 1988, Schindler was assigned to Lima Company, 3rd Battalion, 7th Marine Regiment, where he was meritiously promoted to corporal, then sergeant. He deployed to Operation Desert Storm. Upon returning from the Persian Gulf, Schindler was assigned to 1st Force Recon Battalion for the next five years.

Schindler then became a drill instructor at MCRD San Diego, where he served through seven different platoons. After achieving the rank of first sergeant, he received orders to 3/11.

He resides in Lake Elsinore, Calif., with his wife Setsuko, and his 5-year-old son, Gage.

3/4 organizes first unit L.I.N.K.S. CAX

SGT. ROBERT L. FISHER III
COMBAT CORRESPONDENT

Spouses from Lifestyles, Insights, Networking, Knowledge and Skills and the Key Volunteer Network along with Marines from 3rd Battalion, 4th Marine Regiment, organized the first L.I.N.K.S. Combined Arms Exercise for an individual unit June 1.

They taught military spouses from 3/4 some essential basics of military life.

"They've married into this military lifestyle and most of them didn't come from a military background. This is a way to get them to start thinking about how their life has changed and how they need to prepare, especially for a deployment," said Christina Curtin, L.I.N.K.S. mentor and wife of Staff Sgt. Michael R. Curtin, Headquarters Battalion, MCAGCC.

Throughout the day, spouses learned about deployments, leave and earnings statements, moving and how to network with other military spouses. They received the chance to build friendships through team-building exercises, and they received a tour of the base from the back of 7-ton trucks.

The CAX gave spouses a

small taste of what Marines go through every day with Meals-Ready-to-Eat for lunch, an obstacle course and pugil stick matches.

"They have a really tough job, though we might not give them enough credit," said Mandi Booth, wife of Cpl. Wesley Booth, India Company.

This is the first time an individual unit organized and supported a L.I.N.K.S. CAX, said Curtin. The last L.I.N.K.S. CAX in March was a base-wide event.

"I'm glad 3/4 decided to this," said Larry Stratton, Marine Corps Community Services family team building officer. "It's very motivating for the ladies. After this, they'll have a better respect for the Marines and what they're husbands do."

Much of 3/4 consisted of new Marines so their training was focused on getting the new Marines and their spouses ready for an upcoming deployment, said Curtin.

"It's just a whole new unit," said Curtin. "This is to help build their cohesiveness for their KVN program.

"Unit readiness depends on family readiness which depends on individual readiness," she said. "A Marine can do a better job in Iraq if

he doesn't have to worry about his family back here."

When a service member deploys the spouse needs to be able to take care of the household, so when the service member returns they can come home and be a part of the family without having to worry about problems, said Curtin.

"As a spouse you get a lot of stuff thrown at you. The more they get educated, the better their family will be," said Curtin.

Nikki Clark, KVN volunteer with 1st Battalion, 7th Marine Regiment, and wife of Sgt. Mike Clark, Headquarters Company, 1/7, said a positive attitude is necessary to make it as a military spouse. Those who can't find a positive outlook may find military life difficult.

"You have to have a positive attitude all the time and that's what L.I.N.K.S. is for, to learn to be positive and be supportive," said Clark. "That's why the KVN is awesome. The L.I.N.K.S. program is awesome. That's why everyone should be a part of this."

Clark got involved in the Key Volunteer Network shortly after arriving at the Combat Center. She said being a KVN has helped her get through deployments

more easily because it takes her mind off being alone.

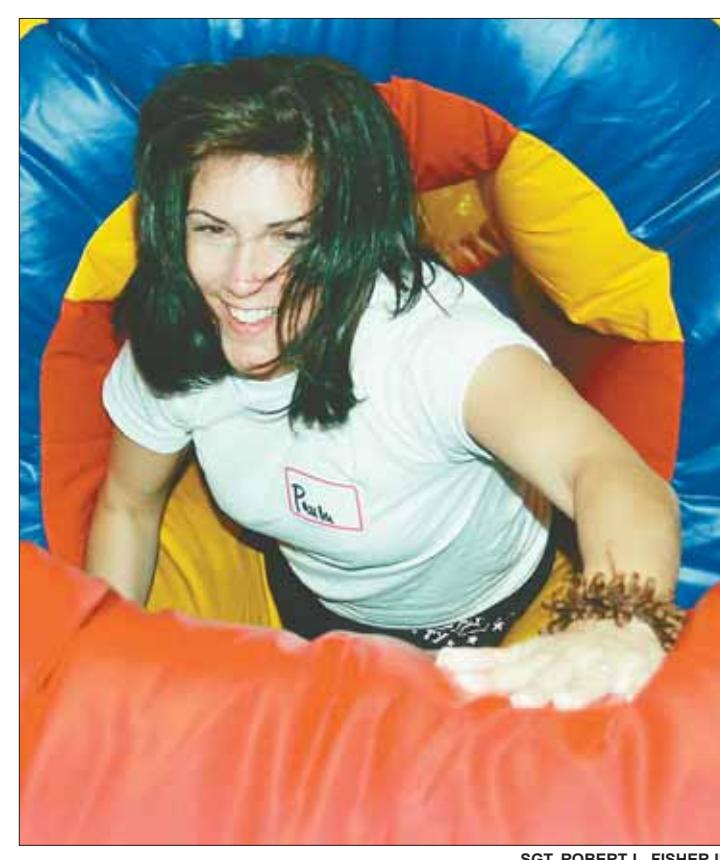
"My husband said I did a 180 degree turnaround since I got involved in this," she said. "I get up every day and think, 'I hope I can help somebody,' and that helps me get through the deployment," she said.

Many of the spouses said they enjoyed the day and learned quite a bit about military life.

"I recommend this to everybody, every new wife, every senior wife, every wife who's been in the Marine Corps and hasn't taken L.I.N.K.S. should take it because it teaches you so many things that you did not know about the Marine Corps," said Julie Bryan, Key Volunteer coordinator and wife of Petty Officer 2nd Class Seth "Doc" Bryan. "Every wife in the Marine Corps and the Navy should do it."

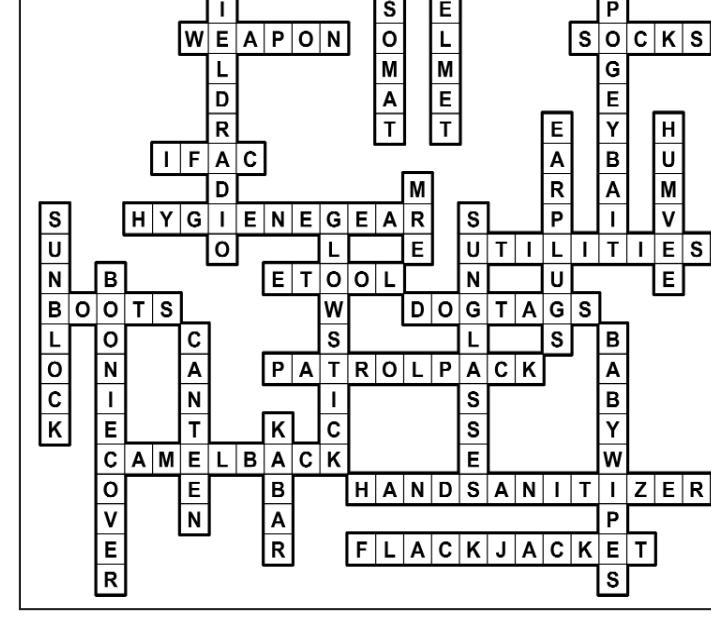
The spouses learned about the Marine Corps, the Navy, the KVN and many other things about the military life to prepare them. Some of them said they felt ready to face a deployment.

"It's all about taking the tears and the bonbons away and giving them positive, pro-active information," said Curtin.



SGT. ROBERT L. FISHER III
Paula Ramirez, wife of Cpl. Jose Ramirez, Weapons Company, 3rd Battalion, 4th Marine Regiment, climbs through the obstacle course in the West Gym June 1.

SOLUTIONS



Range Residue Processing Section makes money by cleaning house

GYSGT. CHRIS W. COX

Public Affairs Chief

This article is the first in a series on recycling aboard the Combat Center.

Did you know that about three quarters of everything you throw in the trash is recyclable? Even items you might consider unusable — used soda cans, old newspapers, broken wooden pallets and brass shell casings from expended rifle rounds, for example — can be broken down into its original form and used again.

Recycling is collecting materials which would otherwise be considered waste, processing them into their basic materials, such as fibers or raw metal, and manufacturing them into new usable products.

One of the missions of the Marine Corps Air Ground Combat Center's Natural Resources and Environmental Affairs Division is to reduce the percentage of solid waste through their own recycling program. That program accounts for everything from common household items to the brass shell casings and aluminum ordnance containers used when units train on

the ranges. The section which handles those ordnance-related items is the Combat Center's Range Residue Processing Station.

"This pad alone generated about \$450,000 last year," said Jim Sanderson, the Station's senior unexploded ordnance technician. "That's brass, steel, aluminum, plastic."

Like household goods recycling centers one might see out in town, the RRPS takes residual ammunition packing or casing materials, separates them into different categories and offers them for sale to foundries and recyclers at a substantially less-expensive price than when it was top-dollar new.

On other military installations with similar training environments, the process to turn in ordnance-related recyclables is handled by the Defense Reutilization and Marketing Office, a sub-division of the Defense Logistics Agency headquartered at Fort Belvoir, Va. Since the DLA is primarily a U.S. Army agency, however, any money received for recyclables, to include items sold through the DRMO

lot, goes directly back into the overall Defense Department budget. Not so, for the RRPS. The money made from the work done here goes back into maintaining Combat Center training areas, according to Sanderson.

A direct benefit which impacts units conducting training is the decreased time it takes to do a turn-in at the RRPS rather than the old way still in use by many installations. This advantage means less time for Marines turning in range residue when they could be training.

"When a unit comes in, normally down there it used to take us between four and eight hours to do a turn-in," Sanderson explained. Since the process has been taken over from DRMO locally, now it normally takes between 15 and 30 minutes for units to turn in their materials because the RRPS handles nothing but range residue — not hazardous waste or out-of-date hardware that needs to be sold to the public like other sections. They have only one mission and clear standard operating procedures to make

this happen, which saves time.

However, one big reason it may take some units more time than necessary to turn in their items is because they don't prepare, and according to Sanderson, a little preparation by the Marines on the range will save a lot of time for those two or three Marines doing the turn-in.

"The more preparation they do out there — the more segregation they do out there — the better off they are here," he said. "I mean, brass from links, links from trash, wood from metal — as much as they can possibly do. We don't ask that they separate the 5.56/7.62/9 mil [9mm] brass. That can go together. All the links can go together."

"If they'll separate it a little bit, take the extra five or 10 minutes in the field, that could save them an hour when they get here," Sanderson stated.

See next week's *Observation Post* for more news about the Combat Center's recycling program.



3rd LAR Marines keep roads clear on outskirts of Fallujah



CPL. GRAHAM A. PAULSGROVE
1ST MARINE DIVISION

GHARMAH, Iraq — They keep their eyes peeled — for their safety and the future of Iraq.

The Marines of D Company, 3rd Light Armored Reconnaissance Battalion, are charged with maintaining the security and stability of Gharmah, a farming town on the outskirts of Fallujah. One of their most important jobs is keeping the routes clear of improvised explosive devices.

Finding the roadside bombs comes down to methodically and slowly searching the routes, said 2nd Lt. Court Rape, a 23-year-old platoon commander in the company.

"We do something a little different every time," said Rape, from College Station, Texas. "Precision randomness. We get units in places they don't expect us, and we have been successful."

It's painstaking work, looking for telltale signs of danger. Some-

times it can just be a gut instinct that things don't look right — like they did the last time the Marines scoured the road.

Cpl. Paul Kozlowski, a combat engineer attached to 3rd LAR Bn., said his Marines "basically sweep off the road," clearing the route and "keeping a lookout for anything unusual."

"It's a big team effort," said Kozlowski, from Bowie, Md.

And it's paying off.

So far their efforts have thwarted the insurgents. Rape's platoon uncovered five IEDs in the last two weeks, none of which caused any harm to the men seeking out the bombs.

They weren't always lucky. Shortly after coming from the far western reaches of Iraq to assist Marines with Regimental Combat Team 5, one vehicle was hit by the very type of weapon they're seeking to root out.

"It was a real eye opener," said Cpl. Joseph E. Sherwood, a 29-year-old team leader from Orlando,

Fla. "We lost our gunner for four days due to a concussion, but it could have been a lot worse."

Most insurgents attempt to place IEDs at night, under the cover of darkness. They lie in wait to attack passing Marines and Iraqi Security Forces.

"They're not brazen enough to place the IED during the day," he said.

Despite those factors, the Marines have detained a few of the IED placers and triggermen. One was a 63-year-old man.

"There is no age limit on the insurgents setting these things off," Sherwood said.

But, the attacks have been limited since the LAR Marines pulled into town and dedicated themselves to clearing the roads. The Marines are turning up more IEDs and Marines running through their areas are safer for it.

"I would say we have been pretty successful," Kozlowski added. "We're keeping the Marines who operate out here safe."

Cpl. Joseph E. Sherwood, a 29-year-old from Orlando, Fla., assigned to Company D, 3rd Light Armored Reconnaissance Battalion, checks out a suspicious pile of dirt for any signs of a roadside bomb.

County commission to provide new local playground equipment

PRESS RELEASE

SAN BERNARDINO COUNTY, Calif. — As part of its goal to improve local child care, First 5 San Bernardino recently announced \$800,000 in funding to support its Second Annual Make a Difference Day (MADD) effort. The funding will be used to purchase new playground equipment for seven selected child care sites countywide. The deadline to apply for funding is July 14.

"Partnering in the true spirit of community service is key to building strong, healthy communities," said First 5 San Bernardino Commission Chair and San Bernardino County Supervisor Josie Gonzales. "We encourage businesses to partner with our local child care centers in this endeavor. Together they can achieve mutually beneficial collaborations that will offer creative and safe learning environments for the children

served by these centers."

Licensed child care centers with an annual operating budget of less than \$250,000 that are interested in applying, will need to complete a community service project during the nationwide annual Make a Difference Day in October. Seven child care centers that complete a collaborative project with their community will be selected to receive a new playground. Interested child care center staff, par-

ents, businesses and community members are encouraged to attend a First 5 San Bernardino pre-application workshop. The workshops, which will be held in June, will help participants learn to prepare their applications, understand project guidelines, and discover new ways to approach their community members for future fundraising efforts and support.

"First 5 San Bernardino values community service projects," said First 5 San Bernardino Executive Director Richard Jarvis. "Our goal is to engage licensed child care centers and help them improve their service to our county's youngest children."

Make a Difference Day is an annual event, taking place this year on October 28. Last year, more than 3 million participants nationwide accomplished thousands of projects in hundreds of towns benefiting more than 22 million people in need. Founded by USA Weekend Magazine and the Points of Light Foundation, Make A Difference Day is the largest community service effort in the nation.

First 5 San Bernardino recently announced a \$3 million dollar Community Investments opportunity, to fund health care access, prenatal care and services for children with special needs. For more information on this and other partnership opportunities, call First 5 San Bernardino at (888) 9FIRST5 or go to <http://www.first5sanbernardino.org>.

About First 5 San Bernardino

Research shows that a child's brain develops most dramatically in the first five years and what parents and caregivers do during these years to support their child's growth will have a meaningful impact throughout life. First 5 San Bernardino, in partnership with 47 contracted service agencies, provides a variety of programs and services designed to promote, support and enhance the early development of children prenatal through age 5 in San Bernardino County. For more information about First 5 San Bernardino, please call (909) 386-7706 or visit the Web site at <http://www.first5sanbernardino.org>.

Four-legged warriors adjust to desert climate

LANCE CPL. JAMES B. HOKE
3RD MARINE AIRCRAFT WING

AL ASAD, Iraq — The sand-filled air and scorching heat of Iraq creates hard conditions for the service members deployed to the war-torn country, and the environment is no less pleasing for the furry four-legged Military Working Dogs and handlers who support them.

During a deployment, MWDs with Military Police Task Force, 2nd Brigade Combat Team, Headquarters and Headquarters Company, 1st Battalion, 14th Infantry Regiment, play the exact same roles as the service members, as they get used to the climate of their new home away from home and carry out their missions to the best of their abilities.

"We have different dogs that do different things," said Staff Sgt. Gregory S. Massey, regional kennel master of the Western area of operations, Military Police Task Force. "Some find bombs, some find people, some find drugs and some do a combination thereof. A lot of the units take them on raids, route clearing and stuff like that."

"They do a lot of different types of missions," the 36-year-old native of Nashville, Tenn., continued. "On base, it is just like garrison back at home. It's clearing for VIPs coming in. We can use them for crowd control or moving people around, too."

Between the Vietnam War and Operation Iraqi Freedom, the MWDs' training did not focus as much on operational missions as they do today.

"It was mainly law enforcement," said Massey. "They just went out and did cop stuff, drug searches, bomb searches and normal MP patrols. So when this all began, we had to shift our training to focus more on the operating forces."

Although the dogs are now in a combat environment where they perform mission after mission, they still maintain their training on a daily basis.

"Training is continuous so that you can keep the dogs sharp," said Sgt. Alex M. Reeb, MWD handler, Military Police Task Force. "For the dogs, the work is the play, as they don't understand the concept of work. To them, finding an IED [Improvised Explosive Device] is their play."

According to Massey, the dogs prefer to be in a deployed environment more than their comfortable concrete kennels in the United States.

"They miss their family and don't get paid the combat pay," said Massey. "On a serious note, they actually like it better out here in a lot of ways. The climate is harder to get used to, but they get used to it. It is more of a home environment. Right now, we have dogs inside, sleeping in beds with their handlers in their racks. Back in the States, they are sleeping in a nice kennel, but they are by themselves. So when they come out here, they are with their handler 24 hours a day, seven days a week."

While the dogs are in Iraq, they form an extremely close bond with the main person who looks out for them — their handler.

"We use the term 'Dog Team,' as we've spent so much time with our dogs that it is pretty much one mind," said Reeb, a 24-year-old native of San Angelo, Texas. "It's not about who is the best handler or the best dog, but who is the best 'Dog Team.'"

While the dogs enjoy being deployed with their handlers to distant lands, they are still subject to combat stress.

"It was funny because we never attributed combat stress to dogs, but it does affect them," said Massey. "We had a dog diagnosed with combat stress. Back home, we can only simu-



LANCE CPL. JAMES B. HOKE
Military Working Dog Baro, an 8-year-old German Shepherd, searches for a hidden box of ammunition during a training exercise at Al Asad, Iraq, May 23.

late the environments and situations so much. Some dogs are just like some people and shut down. Not very many, but it does happen."

The dogs are most credited for the abilities they possess that help them complete their mission, as well as their morale building friendliness.

"They can do some amazing things," said Massey. "They can smell so much better than we can. They increase security for the base and individuals on patrol. They also build morale, as the units kind of adopt them. When they do find something, it may just be one bomb to save one Marine, but that is enough. They save lives."

1/7 Marine brings welding skills to fight against insurgency

CPL. ANTONIO ROSAS
1ST MARINE DIVISION

CAMP AL QA'IM, Iraq — When he joined the Marine Corps in 2002, Cpl. Joshua W. Dale never thought he would be using his welding experience to defeat insurgents in western Iraq.

The 23-year-old section leader with A Company, 1st Battalion, 7th Marine Regiment, brought his ideas to life by inventing a breaching bumper for a humvee in his mobile assault platoon.

The breaching bumper is mounted on the front of the humvee and resembles a large arrowhead made of thick steel. The bumper is used to do one thing — tear through anything that gets in the humvee's way.

"We needed something on our humvees to assault through barriers, like locked gates and low brick walls," said the Silver Street, S.C., native. "This bumper will go through just about anything."

While the bumper has not been tested as of yet, other similar devices of lesser craftsmanship have proven somewhat effective. Dale wanted to build something that would not break or bend like those he had seen crudely constructed "on the fly" by other Marine units.

The bumper, which allows humvees greater flexibility when assaulting the enemy during raids and cordon-and-knock operations, is an alternative to using any type of explosives — the norm when Marines encounter barriers or walls.

"When you use explosives you risk alerting the enemy from the loud noise of explosions," said Dale. "With this breaching bumper you can rupture barriers and overcome obstacles in less time and without giving away your position to the enemy."

Use of the bumper on barriers also minimizes collateral damage — a priority for the Marines conducting security operations alongside Iraqi Security Forces in Iraq's western Al Anbar province.

Nicknamed "the destroyer," the bumper is a major asset for mobile assault platoons, or M.A.P. — a security element of Marines in armored humvees with an assortment of infantry weapons. A M.A.P. provides a heavy presence in the community and is used to disrupt enemy operations.

Marines in the region use the mobile assault platoon to provide a steady presence in local communities and to weed out insurgents hiding in local towns, said 1st Lt. Paul D. Quinn, the M.A.P. officer for A Company.

The 24-year-old from Burkittsville, Md., supports Dale's project as it will allow his Marines greater flexibility in performing their job quicker and overcoming obstacles.

without the use of explosives. the platoon would encounter," said Dale.

Spending less time tied up with barriers during operations allows the Marines to meet their objective of providing mounted security for ground forces a lot more effectively, said Quinn.

While coalition forces throughout the country already have similar devices mounted on their humvees, Dale wanted to improve on the existing design and use stronger materials.

"I still wanted something that was sturdy enough to rip through just about any barrier

In order to take the ideas from the drawing board to the shop floor, Dale was going to need time away from his platoon — something he wanted to avoid.

It was only after breaking his foot while performing maintenance on his humvee that Dale found some time to bring his ideas to life and start on his project.

"I drew up blueprints myself and despite not having the right supplies and tools, I made it work," said Dale who spent several years welding before joining the Marine Corps.

Dale said he never saw himself using his welding skills in the Marine Corps. He joined the Marines to fight insurgents, he said.

"I want to make it clear

humvees in his platoon with the breaching device. With the right supplies, Dale said he can produce about four bumpers a week.

Dale is confident that his idea will gain approval from officials as he considers the apparatus a great tool against defeating the insurgency in any area of operations.

Until then, he says he'll continue to weld when he can, providing the Marines who travel Al Anbar province's dangerous roads daily with one more tool to help them get the job done.



CPL. ANTONIO ROSAS
Cpl. Joshua W. Dale, a 23-year-old section leader with A Company, 1st Battalion, 7th Marine Regiment brought his ideas to life by inventing a breaching bumper for a humvee in his mobile assault platoon.



A fraction of 3/7's awarded warriors

Twenty Marines with India Company, 3rd Battalion, 7th Marine Regiment, stand together behind their battalion command post June 2, after receiving their respective awards from their last deployment. Three Marines were awarded the Bronze Star Medal with Combat "V," 16 Marines were awarded the Purple Heart and two Marines were awarded the Navy and Marine Corps Achievement Medal.

LANCE CPL. MICHAEL S. CIFUENTES

SPORTS & LEISURE

SPORT SHORTS

FATHER'S DAY GOLF
Desert Winds Golf Course will host a Fathers' Day Tournament June 18 at 9 a.m. The format will be a two-person scramble. The cost is \$60 per team and includes greens fee, golf cart, range balls, food and prizes. Call 830-6132 to sign-up.

LEARN TO SWIM
MCCS Pools will begin registration from the first and second sessions of the Learn to Swim Program. Session One begins June 26 and continues through July 6 and Session Two is from July 10 to July 20. Registration is from June 12-June 14, 10 a.m. to 1 p.m. at the Family Pool. The program fee is only \$25 per student or \$22 per student if 2 or more family members are enrolled. For details please call 830-6212.

TWILIGHT GOLF
Desert Winds Golf Course is hosting Twilight Golf every Tuesday at 4:30 p.m. The cost is \$5, which does not include golf cart or club rental or entry fee. The game consists of four players to a team and is played in best ball format. Please contact Al Ybarra at 830-7945 or Mark Carrington at 830-6172 / 6953 for any questions or details.

LEISURE

CASINO NIGHT
Hashmarks SNCO Club will host another Casino Night on Friday, June 16. The night will include free food, prizes, blackjack, roulette and craps. Doors open at 4:30 p.m. and play begins at 6 p.m. The evening is open to NCOs, SNCOs and Officers. To make a reservation or for more information please call 830-6610.

MEDIEVAL TIMES
The SMP Program will be taking a day trip to Medieval Times June 17. The cost is \$35 and includes transportation, tickets and dinner. Participants must sign-up by Wednesday, June 14.

RED CROSS SUMMER YOUTH PROGRAM
The Twentynine Palms Red Cross Summer Youth Program is fast approaching. The program is for youths between the ages of 13 to 18 years old. We have limited availability for youth's 13 to 14 years of age. You may pick up an application at the Red Cross office Bldg 1551, Room 29, Monday to Friday 8 a.m. to 4 p.m. Applications are due back by June 7. The program begins June 19 and ends August 11. For more information please call 830-6685.

FREE BOWLING
Sandy Hill Lanes Bowling Center is offering free lunch time bowling every Monday from 11 a.m. to 1 p.m. Shoe rental is additional.

Did You Know?
The world's shortest stuntman is only 4 ft., 1.7 in. tall.



STORY & PHOTOS BY SGT. ROBERT L. FISHER III
COMBAT CORRESPONDENT

Blistering heat such as the desert may summon, can take the fun away from outdoor activities. But it didn't stop the children as they whizzed down Cactus Street in Twentynine Palms, Calif., June 2 in the first Soapbox Derby in three years.

Their faces lit up with joy as they went soaring down an open hill in little wooden carts. Their parents, sitting along the hill, happily watched their children.

Armed Services YMCA held the derby for children ages 5 to 16. The derby kicked off the Twenty-nine Palms Chamber of Commerce's Street Fair and Car Show along Highway 62 near Adobe Road.

Through the fund-raising event they raised more than \$7,000 and had more than 50 children sign-up to participate, said Sony Avalos, ASYMCA event coordinator and wife of Sgt. Pablo Avalos, Regimental Combat Team 7.

"This is the biggest derby we've had ever," she said. "I'm hoping to bring it back and make it annual."

The money raised will go toward parent and child interactive programs and after-school programs offered to military personnel and their families aboard the Combat Center.

Children competed in the race for trophies in different age divisions, 5-8 and 9-16. Some of the children also won the General's, Mayor's and People's Choice awards.

Marines from Combat Logistics Battalion 7 sponsored many of the children and helped them build their carts because their fathers were deployed to Iraq, said Avalos.

Dakota Kennedy, 7-year-old son of Staff Sgt. Robert Kennedy, CLB-7, said he was grateful for Marines like Cpl. Matt Moore, CLB-7, who sponsored Kennedy and helped build his cart, "The General Lee."

"It's fast, good looking and my dad would be proud," Kennedy said with a smile.

Xavier Johnson, 8-year-old son of Staff Sgt. Dennis Johnson, Headquarters Battalion, MCAGCC, won second place in his age division, 5 to 8. Johnson said he really

ASYMCA hosts the first 29 Palms Soapbox Derby in 3 years



enjoyed watching his son fly down the hill, although pulling the cart back up the hill after each race wasn't quite as exciting. His son said he too enjoyed the day racing.

"He did very good, I'm proud of him," said Annette Johnson, his mother. "He and his daddy built it, and they had fun."

Alexandra Hurlbert, 9-year-old daughter of Staff Sgt. Spencer Hurlbert, 1st Battalion, 14th Marine Regiment, kept a big smile through the derby. She won most of her races and "squished" the competition, said Dawn Hurlbert, her mother.

"It felt really good, but after the race, I shook his hand and told him 'good race,'" Hurlbert said about her first race. Her family dressed in urban camouflage T-shirts to match her cart.

As the sky turned gold by the setting sun and the exhaustingly hot day of over 100 degrees came to a close, Sony said it was all worth it just to see the children's faces.

SOAPBOX DERBY WINNERS

5-8 Division:

- 1st Mark Clinkscale
- 2nd Xavier Johnson
- 3rd Dakota Masterson

9-16 Division:

- 1st Joshua Alderson
- 2nd Jacob Smith
- 3rd Alexandria Hurlbert

ASYMCA Choice:

Shane Estrada

Mayor's Choice:

Zack Robinson

General's Choice:

Zayne Bryan



Staff Sgt. Carey Alderson, Marine Corps Communication-Electronics School, coaches his son, 5-year-old Hunter Alderson, before his son's first race in the Soapbox Derby Friday.



Aaron Thompson, son of Staff Sgt. Michael Thompson, 3rd Battalion, 11th Marine Regiment, soars down the hill in the Soapbox Derby sponsored by Armed Services YMCA Friday.

SAFE!

Tommy Sak, Headquarters Battalion, slides across home plate as 3rd Assault Amphibian Vehicle Battalion Team 1's catcher, Joe Clark, misses the tag Tuesday night at Felix Field.

Commanding General's Intramural Softball League Standings as of June 7

	W	L
MCCES	7	0
3/11	8	1
CLB-7	9	2
AAV's #1	9	2
PMO	8	2
VMU	10	3
TANKS	8	3
SJA	6	3
TANKS (Comm)	5	4
HQBN (BP)	5	7
HQBN	4	6
IPAC	4	6
2/7	3	7
HQBN #2	3	7
ESD	2	8
AAV's #2	1	7
HOSPITAL	0	11
TTECG	0	11



CPL. BRIAN A. TUTHILL

Brian Morones collects toy ducks with his hand behind his back for points during a game at the Operation Enduring Families luau and pool party at the Family Pool.



CPL. BRIAN A. TUTHILL

Michelle Garcia shields her son Ricky from the sun at the Operation Enduring Families luau and pool party at the Family Pool.

OEF luau, pool party brings families together



CPL. BRIAN A. TUTHILL

Welcoming families to the event, Lt. Col. Roger B. Turner, commanding officer, 3rd Battalion, 7th Marine Regiment, thanked all who attended the event for their support of their deployed spouse.

CPL. BRIAN A. TUTHILL
COMBAT CORRESPONDENT

Hundreds of family members of deployed Combat Center Marines and Sailors attended an Operation Enduring Families luau and pool party Saturday at the Family Pool.

The Marine Corps Community Services-sponsored event, which was open specifically to spouses and children of deployed service members, spanned two hours and supported those families "in the rear" in a fun and welcoming

atmosphere, said Lori Rogers, a key volunteer coordinator and one of the lead organizers.

"We had over 240 people there including the kids and family members Saturday," Rogers said. "I think the last luau and pool party we had here was a couple of years ago, but it was a base-wide event. This was specifically for spouses and families of deployed Marines."

"I think it went really well. We've had some very positive feedback already," she added. "Everyone said they

loved it so far."

Rogers said families from every unit deployed aboard the Combat Center were present, including 1st Battalion, 7th Marine Regiment; 3rd Light Armored Reconnaissance Battalion; Combat Logistics Battalion 7; 7th Marine Regiment Headquarters Company; Marine Wing Support Squadron 374; Marine Unmanned Vehicle Squadron 1 and 1st Tank Battalion.

Patrons were treated to a free barbecue lunch as well as free refreshments to beat the 104 degree heat. Umbrellas, leis and tropically-themed trinkets adorned tables to add to the atmosphere. Many family members said just having a place to come together with other families in their shoes was a great experience.

"The fact that we could come together today with all these people who are in the same situation we are in was wonderful," said Stefanie Flaishans, whose husband is currently deployed with MWSS-374. "I think sometimes people get so concerned about our guys over there that they forget about the kids and families in the rear."

"We're having a ball and it looks like everyone is having a lot of fun," she continued. Flaishans brought her four children to the event. "I'd like to see more of these done for the families."

Throughout the luau, a raffle was held for various prizes donated by MCCS including theme park tickets, purses, a digital camera and an MP3 player.

Kids also played at the pool during a number of games for them both in and out of the water at the main pool and the wading pool for kids of any age.

"The kids really had a blast," said Rogers. "The games we had were a big success. They also loved the popcorn and snow cones we had."

Near the end of the event, Lt. Col. Roger B. Turner, commanding officer of 3rd Battalion, 7th Marine Regiment, spoke to spouses and thanked them for their efforts and sacrifices.

"I'd like to thank everybody for coming today and thank you for all of your sacrifice and support to your Marines who are forward," Turner said to the families. "It's really meaningful and provides a huge relief when you have that family support from back home."

Rogers said more OEF events are planned this year to bring families together in similar ways.

"I was glad that everyone came," she said. "All the different units and everyone going through the same thing were there together. I think the best thing is it brought those families together so they could see they are not by themselves."



CPL. BRIAN A. TUTHILL

Ashley and Tori Emhoff take a drink in the shade at the Operation Enduring Families luau and pool party at the Family Pool.



Deven Black, forward with 2nd Battalion, 7th Marine Regiment, rushes down the field with the ball as midfielders with Headquarters Battalion try to regain possession of the ball during their match Wednesday at Felix Field.

LANCE CPL. MICHAEL S. CIFUENTES



LANCE CPL. MICHAEL S. CIFUENTES
Steven Jackman, center forward with 2nd Battalion, 7th Marine Regiment, travels toward 2/7's first goal of the game during their match Wednesday at Felix Field.

2/7 claims victory over HQBN

LANCE CPL. MICHAEL S. CIFUENTES

COMBAT CORRESPONDENT

Second Battalion, 7th Marine Regiment, took on Headquarters Battalion in a 4-1 victory Wednesday on Felix Field as the intramural soccer season rolled through its fourth week.

2/7 burdened HQBN with a shut out for almost a full, 90-minute game. Steven Jackman, 2/7's center forward, contributed two goals for his team, along with one from Agustin Molinanavarro, midfielder, and Deven Black, forward.

Jobany Gonzalez-Lopez made HQBN's lone goal during the final five minutes of game play.

The match began at 5:30 p.m., Wednesday afternoon, as scattered rain showers passed over the field. Both teams contributed a full effort to the game as both benches were undermanned. Nonetheless, both showed teamwork, but 2/7 took the "W."

"Today was rare that we had most of our players," said Molinanavarro, 2/7's team captain. "We needed what we had because we're not individuals when we play out here. We play as a team, and we win as a team — just like today. Everyone here knows each other and has already become familiar with how each other plays."

"Our defense played really well today," added Molinanavarro. "They were able to control the ball and pass it up to the forwards. What our team keeps in mind is that the defensemen are the ones who 'stuff' the [opponent's] offense; the midfielders are working hard and hustling, controlling the center of the field; and the forwards get the glory by scoring goals. That's our key to success. We're not all superstars here, but we play our best."

With the demanding schedule of their battalion, the soccer players of 2/7 rarely get a chance to practice as a team, said the game leading goal scorer, Jackman.

"It's hard to improve as a team when a lot can't make it," he said. "We're a really good team when everyone shows up. We all make an effort to practice. If we're not training in 'the field,' we're practicing on the field."

"Today our win came from aggressive playing, good passing and keeping pressure on the other team," continued Jackman. "We play better when we keep the ball on the ground. We always stay focused all game, we keep our heads up and we pick each other up when we need it. That's how we play."

For most players, the intramural soccer league is a way to relieve stress from hard days at work and get out on the field for good recreation, said Molinanavarro.

"Playing soccer is great for the spirit of the individuals who play out here, and it builds some added camaraderie to our battalion," said

Molinanavarro. "We all look forward to playing soccer after work. It's motivating to us when we have a game later during the day."

HQBN also carries the same motivation to have a great time on the field, said Marcos Madrid, HQBN's goal keeper. Unfortunately, the loss came tough for their players.

"We saw things falling apart here and there," said Madrid. "We weren't communicating like we were supposed to. That's the only way

we can score goals — by communicating with each other on the field. We also couldn't put any shots on goal. Maybe if we shot more toward the goal, we'd have a better chance of scoring more."

The midfield tried to expand their playing space after the second half by bringing the ball toward the sides of the field, said HQBN's Easau Zuno, forward.

"It's tough playing well when a lot of key players are missing," said Zuno. "We

always keep on playing with what he have and try to do our best with that."

Marine Corps Communication-Electronics School rolled over 1st Tank Battalion in a 5-4 victory shortly after the 2/7-HQBN match.

The season continues Mondays and Wednesdays on Felix Field. 1st Tanks will take on 3rd Battalion, 7th Marine Regiment, Monday at 5:30 p.m. Marine Unmanned Aerial Vehicle Squadron-1 will take on 2/7 afterwards.

