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THIS ISSUE

A4 - Saipan Native

A7 - 3rd LAR

B1 - 801 Housing

Marine remembered by family, friends, co-workers



Friends and fellow Marines of Pfc. Jaron C. Meadows look at a photo of Meadows, alongside his Marine Corps Communication-Electronics School football jersey at his memorial service July 27.

LANCE CPL. REGINA N. ORTIZ
COMBAT CORRESPONDENT

A Marine was honored by friends and family members at a memorial service at the Combat Center's Protestant Chapel July 27 after he lost his life in an auto accident July 16.

Pfc. Jaron C. Meadows, an administrative clerk at the Marine Corps Communication-Electronics School, will be dearly missed by his co-workers and football team, who were also his friends, said Col. Marshall I. Considine, MCCES commanding officer.

"He always had a smile on his face," he said. "He was extremely proud when his Texas Longhorns won the national college football championship. He never took that cap off!"

Meadows, a 19-year-old Leander, Texas, native, played football throughout high school and was quick to join the MCCES team after

arriving at the unit, said Master Sgt. Michael R. Harris, MCCES' football coach last year.

Harris was impressed with the mark he left on his team, not only as a good football player, but as the enthusiast of the team, he said.

"He started the year as the third string tailback, and by the end of the first game he was the second," Harris explained. "He started the second game and led us to victory, but that was also the last game he played that season.

"It seemed like a normal play, but Meadows didn't get up after being taken down by two defenders," he continued. "I went over to him and he said 'I'm sorry coach, I didn't pick up the first and now I can't get up.'"

Meadows seriously injured his knee and doctors told him he would be lucky to ever run again, let alone play football, said Harris.

"He still showed up to every practice and

every game, wearing his jersey proudly, smiling, encouraging his teammates and taunting the opposition," he said.

Sgt. Nathan J. Huff, teammate and MCCES training non-commissioned officer, remembered a game during Halloween, when Meadows arrived dressed as Joe Dirt, a movie character, with a mullet style wig, he said, laughing at the memory.

"He was the team's crutch," he said. "He was the glue that held us together and lifted all of our spirits."

Meadows disregarded the doctor's diagnosis and did what he could so he could run and play football again. He showed up to practice this year as good as new, said Harris.

There was a lot more to Meadows than his love of football. The dedication, determination

See MEMORIAL, A11

'Darkside' Devil Dog dons Silver Star

BY LANCE CPL. MICHAEL S. CIFUENTES
3RD BATTALION, 4TH MARINE REGIMENT

In a conflict that has been lasting for three years, more than 170 U.S. service members who have fought in Iraq have been awarded the Silver Star. Wyatt L. Waldron, a former corporal with 3rd Battalion, 4th Marine Regiment, has recently been added to that list of distinguished few.

Waldron was awarded the Silver Star in a formation at the Combat Center's Camp Wilson July 27.

The Quartz Hill, Calif., native served with 3/4 Weapons Company for four years, participating in three Operation Iraqi Freedom tours. He ended his honorable service in January 2006.

Roughly six months after he embarked on his journey in the civilian world, he was called back to Twentynine Palms, Calif., to stand in front of his old company and be decorated one last time.

The 25-year-old former heavy machine-gunner traveled from his hometown, with his fiancé, his parents and other family members to receive the award from his former company commander and first sergeant.

Because the Leatherneck has been out of the Corps for six months, he was not in uniform and sporting a goatee. He stood at attention in front of the company and was pinned with the medal that read, "for gallantry in action" on the back and carried himself as a Marine leader who never lost his bite as a Devil Dog.

See SILVER STAR, A5



Wyatt L. Waldron, a former corporal with Weapons Company, 3rd Battalion, 4th Marine Regiment, receives a Silver Star Medal in a company formation aboard the Combat Center's Camp Wilson July 27.



Presents
a free
concert
with the
**Charlie
Daniels Band**



—Monday—
8-9:30 p.m.
at Victory Field

The uniform for
all Marines
attending this
event is desert
digital cammies

DO'S AND DON'TS

Do's:
• Do bring water.

Don'ts:
• Don't bring outside alcohol. \$2 refreshments will be sold on site.
• Don't bring weapons, (including pocket knives).
• Don't bring your pets (stuffed or live).
• Don't bring audio or video recording equipment.

PARKING

This is a general parking event. The lot adjacent to the Provost Marshal's Office will be available for parking. PMO will have a traffic control point on the corner of 5th and Bourke Street.

COMING NEXT ISSUE

- Spirit Of America Tour
- 3/4 Mojave Viper
- Soccer Championship

THIS DAY IN MARINE CORPS HISTORY

August 4, 1855
Marines from the
USS Powhatan
captured 17
pirate junks near
Hong Kong.

Birth announcements Sempertoons

By Gunnery Sgt. Charles Wolf



Born June 28, 2006, weighing 9 lbs. 3 oz. and measuring 22 inches

HALEY OLIVIA THOMPSON
Daughter of Sgt. and Mrs. Cordell L. Thompson
Born June 28, 2006, weighing 8 lbs. 3 oz. and measuring 21 inches

ETHAN SCOTT MILFORD
Son of Lance Cpl. and Mrs. Scott Milford
Born June 28, 2006, weighing 10 lbs. 6 oz. and measuring 22.1 inches

MAVERICK LEATHERNECK JOHNSON
Son of Staff Sgt. and Mrs. Jason L. Johnson
Born July 1, 2006, weighing 10 lbs. 5 oz. and measured 21.7 inches

OMAR MANUEL ROMERO
Son of Cpl. Manuel and Lance Cpl. Lucian Romero
Born July 1, 2006, weighing 8 lbs. 7.2 oz. and measuring 20.7 inches

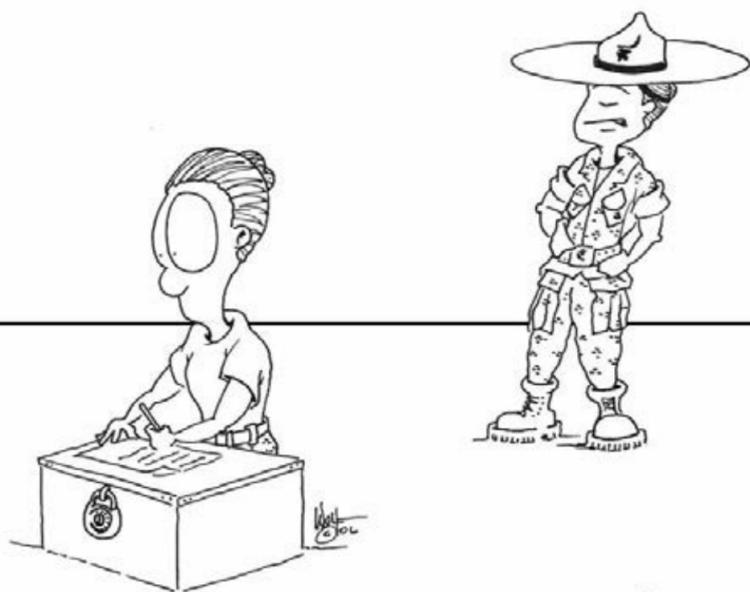
JOHN WILLIAM MONROE
Son of William Monroe and Staff Sgt. Patricia O'Rourke
Born June 21, 2006, weighing 8 lbs. 10 oz. and measuring 21 inches

KEIRA YOLITZEN JACKSON
Daughter of Sgt. and Mrs. Gary Jay Jackson Jr.
Born June 25, 2006, weighing 6 lbs. 3 oz. and measuring 20 inches

ROCKLAND PAGE MENENDEZ
Daughter of HM3 and Mrs. Louis Menendez
Born June 27, 2006, weighing 7 lbs. 3 oz. and measuring 20.6 inches

SHUN LEVY WILLIAMS
Son of Staff Sgt. and Mr. Sherry D. Williams

P.S. - One more thing Mom, tell father I now know the answer to "WHO'S My DADDY" and it's not him.



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C.O.P. Corner

Community Oriented Policing

The proactive voice of crime prevention



Presented by the Provost Marshal's Office Crime Prevention Section

New Towing Policies

Do you know the vehicle towing policies on the Combat Center?

- Marine Corps Air Ground Combat Center Policy Letter 02-05 states that vehicles are subject to towing, at the owner's expense, if they fall into one or more of the following categories:

- Driver of the vehicle is processed for driving under the influence or while intoxicated by alcohol, drugs or refusal to submit to testing.

- Driver of the vehicle is processed for driving on a suspended or revoked state license or on suspended base driving privileges.

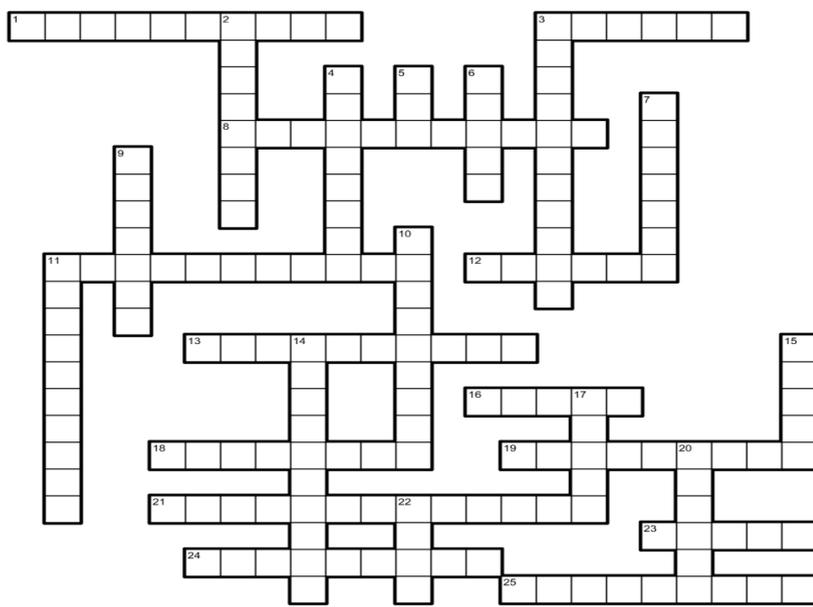
- Speeding in excess of 20 mph over the posted speed limit, or any form of reckless driving that endangers life, limb, or property of any person.

As prescribed in CCO P1630.8C, Motor Vehicle and Traffic Regulations.
As directed by the Provost Marshal or Traffic Court Officer.

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

FIELD GEAR



ACROSS

- Small, camouflaged backpack used for patrolling
- Kevlar material that covers and protects your head
- Soft hat with a brim all around
- Protective vest
- Rifle, pistol or Ka-Bar
- Used with a red lens
- Worn under footwear; some stink
- Protects ears from loud noises that cause damage.
- Tissues used for field showers... or toilet paper
- Kills germs and bacteria on hands
- High-Mobility Multipurpose Wheeled Vehicle
- Water container that straps to your back
- Chemiluminescent stick

DOWN

- Snacks
- Toiletry items
- Lotion that protects the skin from sun burn
- Meal Ready to Eat
- small, portable shovel (- _ _)
- Small, green water container
- Identification worn around neck at all times
- Camouflaged blouse and trousers
- Source of communication; 0621 - _____ operator
- Protective shaded eyewear
- Protective footwear laced to your feet
- Detachable bayonet (_ - _)
- A soft surface to sleep on
- Individual First Aid KIT

[Solutions on A9]

Centerspeak

Are you going to the Charlie Daniels Band concert

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



PFC ARTURO WEBER
27, G. Co.



CPL. DAVID MCCOLLUM
4TH COMBAT ENGINEERS BN. C. Co.



LANCE CPL. BRANDON DION
HEADQUARTERS BATTALION, A. Co.

“Yes, because I like the song ‘The Devil Went Down to Georgia.’ It’s a cool song.”

“No. I would rather be in the field training with my Marines.”

“Yes, because I like his beard.”

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:
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Annual 'Soldier Ride' receives local support

Lima 3/7 Marine, double amputee, among cyclists

CPL. BRIAN A. TUTHILL
Combat Correspondent

More than eight months have passed since 3rd Battalion, 7th Marine Regiment's Cpl. Neil Frustaglio lost both his legs in Iraq. As a 22-year-old double amputee, Frustaglio came back to Twentynine Palms, Calif., July 26 on a modified bicycle alongside 10 other cyclists as part of Soldier Ride, an annual cross-country cycling event designed to motivate recovering amputees and raise donations for the Wounded Warrior Project.

Soldier Ride 2006 began May 6 at Montauk Point, N.Y., where the initial group of riders dipped their rear tires into the Atlantic Ocean before setting off for Marine Corps Base Camp Pendleton, Calif. The current group, which is only comprised of two of the initial riders, dipped their front tires into the Pacific July 27, some 3,000 miles later.

As injured service members of all branches except the Coast Guard rode and rotated back to Walter Reed or other hospitals to continue their treatments, the total number of riders increased to more than 85 this year as they replaced each other along the route, raising more than \$500,000 in donation across country in more than 70 cities.

The group received one of their warmest welcomes as they came into Twentynine Palms as more than 80 Marines from Frustaglio's unit, and local residents lined the city's streets to cheer them on.

Although it was supposed to be a surprise for him, the Marines of Lima and India Companies who came to welcome the riders had let the cat out of the bag for Frustaglio.

"I had been talking to a lot of the guys from my company and we're all close, so it wasn't long before I found out about this," he said. "It was great. I was so excited I could barely sleep last night, knowing I was going to be here and see them again."

Frustaglio, who joined the ride in Phoenix days earlier during a heat wave, was one of two riders using an arm-powered bicycle as he awaits his prosthetics.

As the small caravan of police escorts, Soldier Ride participants and support vehicles made its way past the Marines and supporters, roaring cheers, car horns applause and whistling could be heard throughout the area. Many Marines snapped to rigid attention and held crisp salutes as their wounded brothers-in-arms passed. One Marine even ran with the bikes for a distance waving a large Marine Corps flag in hand.

As riders parked for the night at a local hotel, Lima Company Marines circled around their friend many have not seen since they that fateful day in Iraq.

"I was hurt December 7, and some are gone but a lot of my guys are still with the company," said Frustaglio, whom many lovingly call "Frag." The lasting camaraderie and brotherhood of the unit was apparent as one Marine held up a sign he made for Frustaglio which jokingly read "Got Legs?"

"I'm really glad to see them all again," Frustaglio said.

For Staff Sgt. John Sczcepanowski, Marine Corps liaison to Walter Reed Army Medical Center who joined up with the team in Texas, seeing this homecoming and Frustaglio's smile was very moving.

"To see the way he reacted when we came through and the welcoming here really summed it up for us," he said.

One factor each rider had to deal with from Arizona to California was the intense Mojave Desert heat, which peaked around 120 in the open barrens between cities.

"We started on Monday from Phoenix and it was just blistering," said Frustaglio. "The heat has been kicking our asses, so we keep hydrated and haven't had any heat cases yet. All you can do is just keep pushing."

"I wanted to do this because I wanted to get out and accomplish something," he continued. "This is something to get you away from [Washington] D.C. and away from the hospital environment but it's also a challenge. Camp Pendleton is the end all to the ride. It's definitely going to be an accomplishment and be the biggest ride I've ever done."

When his prosthetics are ready sometime this month, Frustaglio's goal is to be able to run again, the most difficult ability for amputees to regain, he said. His plan is to run in the Marine Corps Marathon in November and take part in next year's Soldier Ride.

"Neil's friends who were also hit are still back at Walter Reed," said Sczcepanowski. "I hope to have them rehabilitated enough [to participate next time] and this motivates them to come out and make next year's ride bigger."

To find out ways of donating or more information on the Soldier Ride, visit www.soldierride.com.



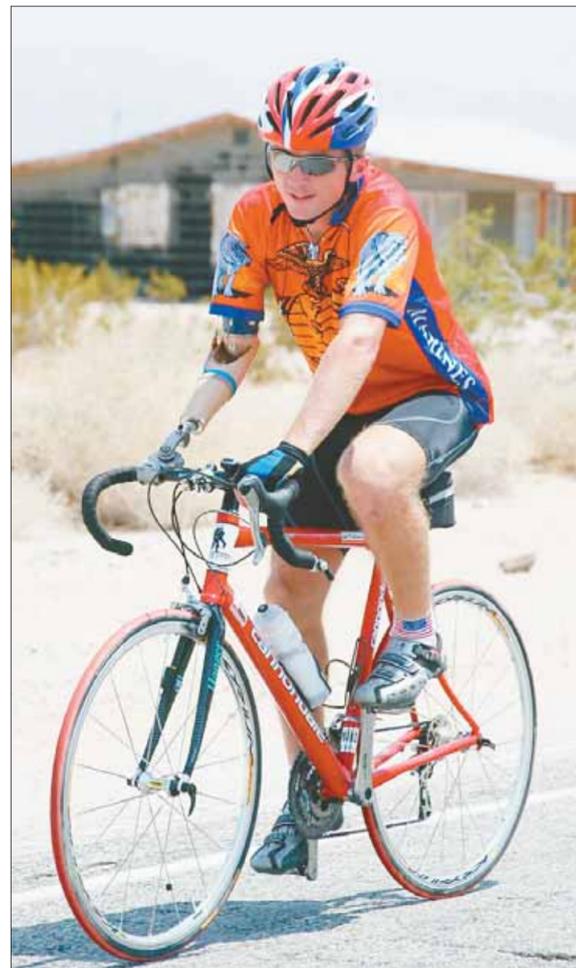
CPL. BRIAN TUTHILL

Wounded veterans ride down Highway 62 near the Twentynine Palms airport July 26 as they neared the end of their ride from Phoenix.



CPL. BRIAN TUTHILL

Marines of India and Lima Companies, 3rd Battalion, 7th Marine Regiment, cheer on Cpl. Neil Frustaglio of Soldier Ride 2006 as he passes.



CPL. BRIAN TUTHILL

Army Staff Sgt. Yegor Bondarenko uses a special prosthetic arm attachment in order to ride a bike for Soldier Ride 2006.



CPL. BRIAN TUTHILL

Cpl. Neil Frustaglio, a double amputee formerly with Lima Company, 3rd Battalion, 7th Marine Regiment, meets with Marines and sailors from his company, many of whom he has not seen since he was injured in December in Iraq.

2/7 Saipan native brings enthusiasm

CPL. BRIAN A. TUTHILL

COMBAT CORRESPONDENT

Thousands of immigrants from nations all over the world proudly come to this country to start new lives, but few American citizens have never stepped foot in America. For Lance Cpl. Jeffrey A. Rocha, a 2nd Battalion, 7th Marine Regiment, Marine and native of Garaparn on the Pacific island of Saipan, his coming to America tale had him stepping off a plane last October and onto the yellow footprints in San Diego.

"I had never been away from home that great of a distance before, and I was scared and excited at the same time," said Rocha, whose home is a U.S. territory and the sight of ferocious fighting by Marines in World War II. "I was leaving a small island to go to a bigger world, but I had to be focused on my training."

Before arriving at Echo Company April 18, Rocha was awarded by his peers for his enthusiasm, support and devotion from the School of Infantry West at Marine Corps Base Camp Pendleton, Calif. The Paul Ison award, given to those voted "most likely to go to war with," earned him a meritorious promotion to lance corporal.

In Saipan, his recruiter, the only one on the island, gave him a book of recruit knowledge, which he said he devoured to help him prepare for what he said was one of the greatest challenges in his life.

"When I first saw the drill instructors at the airport, I thought to myself, 'Now it's real,'" said Rocha, who speaks both English and Tagalog fluently. "I just tried to fit in. But there were some Marines I met before who encouraged me. They said it's hard, but it's not impossible. So that's what kept me going. If I can do it, you can do it."

"The hardest thing about boot camp and being in the Marine Corps for me has been being separated from my family," he continued. "I know they love me and I know they are thinking of me the whole time, so it doesn't bother me as much."

Although he has been serving for nearly nine months, Rocha has still not had the opportunity to return home to see his family. He will deploy with 2/7 in late winter and plans to spend as much of his predeployment leave with his family as possible.

"I can't wait to see them and tell them about everything," he said. "I'm going to go back to my church and see my pastor and talk to people about the Marine Corps."

Although Marines are trained to tough it out in nearly any circumstance, Rocha admits his first days aboard the base were very rough for him coming from a tropical island. With a combination of elevation, humidity and heat, he nearly fainted while checking into 2/7, but has since acclimatized.

"Coming here to Twentynine Palms was a wakeup call," said Rocha. "I have never been to the desert before. It's really dry and I almost fainted from the weather and the hot sun."

Rocha also strives to make good use of his time while stationed here. He said one of his favorite weekend activities is going on trips with the Single Marine Program, doing community service and volunteering with his church.

"My weekends are really my only free time, but there are Marines who just stay in the barracks and play video games and drink beer, and I don't want to be like them," he said.

Other Marines in his unit, like Cpl. Kris Decapua, his squad leader, say they notice his efforts to work hard, better himself and help out in the community.

"He tries really hard," he said. "He's inexperienced in some areas, but he's always learning and putting out. He does volunteer stuff all the time with SMP and with his church."

Unlike some of his peers, Rocha has a plan for his time in the Marine Corps, and near the top of that list is to go to college and get a degree. He said he dreams of becoming a commissioned officer, either through a college program after his enlistment ends or through the Marine Enlisted Commissioning Education Program.

"I chose the Marine Corps because I wanted to be the best," Rocha said. "Things are going well for me here and I hope I can share what I've learned with others."



CPL. BRIAN A. TUTHILL

Lance Cpl. Jeffrey Rocha, a native of Saipan, rests in the shade at Range 110 with Echo Company, 2nd Battalion, 7th Marine Regiment.

SILVER STAR, from A1

He spoke to the Marines of Weapons Company moments after being congratulated by his peers.

"Be brave. Don't let down if you come under attack," said Waldron to some old and new members of his old section. "You've got to have no fear. Listen to your leaders because they know what you will see out there. And remember that the Marines you are with now are the only ones you have when you're out there. Take care of each other and respect one another."

The three time combat veteran shed light on his experiences to the Marines so the company could come home from a fourth deployment successfully once again, said Waldron.

"I gave the Marines advice on what they should work on," he said. "I really wanted to give them a little encouragement."

Waldron's citation was for his brave and selfless actions in a fierce battle against the enemy during combat operations June 19, 2005, in Iraq.

While serving as a section leader with Combined Anti-Armor Team 1, Weapons Company, he led his section on a vehicle-mounted security patrol along a road in Al Anbar province. As the four-vehicle convoy traveled down the route, Waldron, who was in the first vehicle, spotted an improvised explosive device on the side of the road. He told the last two vehicles on the patrol to halt short of it while his vehicle and the one behind him pushed passed it.

Just as the second vehicle passed the spotted IED, another IED detonated near Waldron's vehicle, initiating a coordinated IED and small arms fire ambush by a 50-man enemy force.

Sgt. Andrew P. Schweers, a section leader with CAAT 1, was traveling in the second vehicle and recalled the beginning of the enemy ambush as he spotted a man with an AK-47 just as the blast hit the vehicle in front of him.

Waldron immediately saw four enemy machinegun positions firing at the lead vehicle. With no hesitation, Schweers notified the direction of the ambush to the last two vehicles as Waldron directed his driver to turn into the ambush and the vehicle's gunner to engage the enemy machinegun positions.

"The enemy was trying to push us down a road where they could surround us with machinegun fire, but I knew not to fall into what they had planned for us," said Waldron. "I didn't want us to go where they wanted us to. I knew we had to destroy their machinegun bunkers."

The four-vehicle convoy's shift drove the enemy insurgents from their positions.

"We opened up [fire] for a minute or two until we gained fire superiority," said Schweers, a Minnetonka, Minn., native. "After that we pushed through the kill zone."

Once the machinegun bunkers were destroyed from the furious fire of the M2 .50 caliber machine gunners, the Marines dismounted from the vehicles.

Waldron directed his vehicle to keep the suppressive fire on the enemy's positions, and he called for the second vehicle's gunner to assist in fire power. Moments later, several insurgents met the wrath of Waldron and his M-16.

Although the enemy insurgents outnumbered CAAT 1 by more than 30 men, the Marines were the victors at the end of the two-and-a-half-hour-long battle. Waldron then led his section in destroying the fleeing the enemy.

They abandoned their ground yet still made slight efforts to fight back, said Schweers. Despite a hail of machinegun and rifle fire from the enemy, Waldron continued his actions on foot as his vehicle's .50 caliber machine gunner continued to provide suppressive fire.

"As we were chasing them down, we were pretty much



BY LANCE CPL. MICHAEL S. CIFUENTES

Sgt. Maj. Mark M. Geletko, battalion sergeant major of 3rd Battalion, 4th Marine Regiment, congratulates Wyatt L. Waldron, a former corporal with 3/4, who was awarded the Silver Star Medal July 27 in a company formation at Camp Wilson.

killing them," said Schweers.

After the fighting had ended, Waldron conducted a thorough search of the ambush site to find any other enemy elements. He then moved his section to extract a scout sniper team, which had been compromised and also received enemy fire.

Five hours after the initial attack, CAAT 1 was relieved by Lima Company.

"Corporal Waldron pretty much coordinated the whole fight after we got hit with the initial attack," said Schweers who turned 24-years-old the day of the firefight. "He was on the radio giving the commands, and he pointed us in the right direction where we could fight back and win. He said to us, 'follow me and cover my ass.'"

The Marines with CAAT 1 were very confident throughout their assault that day, said Waldron. Training may have seemed monotonous for the Marines before that day, but training kicked in and saved their lives.

"A big kicker for us that day was we did not have any casualties from the fight," said Waldron. "That was the best part that I remembered. Our trucks had bullet holes, but our gunners were on the spot with it. They fought back hard.

"It was a team effort," he added. "I couldn't have led my Marines into this fight if I didn't think they could do it. This was the best CAAT platoon in the Marine Corps, and they were with me, backing my plays. Sergeant Schweers was key in this. He followed me and backed me up the whole way."

Waldron's achievements in his four years in the Marine Corps made a lasting impression on his seniors, peers and subordinates alike. According to his citation, Waldron's contributions to his unit throughout their third deployment, but specifically on June

19, 2005, dubbed the "Father's Day Massacre" by members of Weapons Company, outweigh the contributions of any other Marine of the same grade in his platoon. Waldron was recommended for the Bronze Star for his valor, but was enthusiastically recommended and approved for the Silver Star by the commandant of the Marine Corps, Gen. Michael Hagee.

Waldron is now in a select group of Silver Star recipients, which includes Lt. Gen. Lewis "Chesty" Puller, Army Gen. George S. Patton and Marine sniper Carlos Hathcock.

"It's a complete honor to be in the same category as other Silver Star recipients," said Waldron. "It was really cool to be decorated in front of my family, and see all of the Marines I served with."

Along with the Silver Star, Waldron received the Navy and Marine Corps Achievement Medal with a Combat "V" for valor, during his first tour to Iraq, and a Navy Commendation Medal with a Combat "V" during his second tour.

He was also combat meritoriously promoted to Lance Corporal during his first tour and combat meritoriously promoted to Corporal during his second tour.

"Waldron is an all around true infantry combat leader," said Schweers. "Everyone looked up to him and followed him to hell and back. He's a crazy bastard, and he's awesome at what he does. Still, it's always a team effort during combat."

Waldron currently resides in his hometown, Quartz Hill, Calif. Since he's been out, he's enjoyed many fishing trips and spending time with his family. However he misses the camaraderie and spirit of the Corps, he said. He plans to train to become a member of the Los Angeles County Sheriff's department. He and his fiancé are also expecting a baby in October.

'Darkside' unleashes arsenal at Range 400

LANCE CPL. MICHAEL S. CIFUENTES
3RD BATTALION, 4TH MARINE DIVISION

As the fervent sunlight shined on the surface of the Combat Center's training area, a company of 'Darkside' Marines, 3rd Battalion, 4th Marine Regiment, treaded the land in a company-sized assault exercise.

The infantry companies from 3/4 journeyed out to Range 400 July 29 to exercise their skills on taking down enemy fortified positions.

Along with their brutal fighting tactics, the companies were accompanied by elements of the battalion's Weapons Company. An M2 .50 caliber machine gun and a MK19 40mm machine gun overlooked the range, as the Mortar Platoon waited on the side of the range with their M252 81mm Mortars.

The companies were also equipped with combat engineers to perform a tactical movement known to Marines as breaching — using explosives to open up or clear out obstacles in order to move a unit through terrain.

The purpose of the exercise was to practice assaulting an enemy fortified position using unique Marine tactics, diversions and heavy fire power, said Chief Warrant Officer 2 John D. Whiting, 3/4 battalion gunner.

"The exercise is not specifically in preparation for a certain battle," said Whiting, a Ridgecrest, Calif., native. "This is being rehearsed for any enemy force that holds a strong point. No matter where we deploy to, this test of skill and communication will be effective when attacking strong, enemy positions."

Companies of Marines rushed the terrain in tactical formations. Through communication, mortars were fired on fixed targets and were joined with a heavy barrage of M2 machine gun fire and MK19 devastation.

As the heavy firepower molded the range's terrain by demolishing targets, the companies advanced toward the strong points, where they would provide their own rifle and



Lance Cpl. Joel Puertorodriguez, a Houston native with Combined Anti-Armor Team 1, Weapons Company, 3rd Battalion, 4th Marine Regiment, fires his M2 .50 caliber heavy machine gun at fixed targets down Combat Center's Range 400, as his assistant gunner, Lance Cpl. P. A. Passow, a Laramie, Wyo., native, prepares the next can of ammunition for the gun July 29.

medium-machine gun fire.

Cpl. Daniel J. Greeley, 1st Squad leader, 2nd Platoon, Kilo Company, deployed with the battalion to Iraq twice and recalls using the techniques they exercised at Range 400.

"All of our movements are successful through communication and team movements," said Greeley, a Suffern, N.Y., native.

Although the training was in the form of company movements, individual actions made certain areas of the mock enemy strong points collapse, he added. Some Marines carried and used a Shoulder-Launched Multipurpose Assault Weapons to destroy targets. Other Marines called in for heavy and medium machine gun assistance, as well as medium mortar assistance.

Communication between squads and platoons held the company together during the attack, said Greeley.

"The exercise taught some of the younger guys how to control fire, and suppression," he said.

The communication and distributed tasks gave the Marines the confidence to conduct an assault in combat. The companies met their proficiency on the range, said Whiting.

"We can bring the enemy down by using any and every weapon we have," he added.

It was the fourth time Greeley trained at Range 400, but the commotion of the movement and assault jolted his adrenaline and blood-flow, he said.

"When we train with combined arms we use everything for what it's worth," said Greeley. "We know if it's in the training package we will definitely use it in combat. The range showed us how we did with company movements, diversions, combined firepower and communication. This is exactly what we'll be made of when we're out there on our next deployment."



Lance Cpl. Phillip D. Moesel, Combined Anti-Armor Team 1, Weapons Company, 3rd Battalion, 4th Marine Regiment, pulls back the bolt of an MK19 40mm grenade launcher as his assistant gunner, Pfc. William R. Childress, loads the feed tray with another can of blue dummy rounds.

All in a night's work; 3rd LAR Marines, Special Forces capture 21 insurgents

CPL. GRAHAM A. PAULS-GROVE,
3RD LAR

WESTERN AL ANBAR PROVINCE, Iraq — Coalition Forces struck a blow to the insurgency recently, capturing 21 insurgents during a counter-insurgency operation in southwestern Al Anbar Province, Iraq.

The July 18 operation, a combined effort between U.S. Navy SEALs and Marines between the cities of Ramadi and Rutbah, led to the most detainees netted by U.S. forces in this region since March, Marine leaders here say.

The operation took place near a gas station located between the two cities — a slab of desert sprinkled with a few small villages, connected by one of the province's few major roads.

Marine leaders with the Twentynine Palms, Calif.-based 3rd Light Armored Reconnaissance Battalion, the U.S. military unit assigned to provide security to this region of Iraq, say the capture is a blow to the insurgency's supply chain.

"Most of the guys we nabbed are enablers — they hijack goods to provide for the terrorists operating in Ramadi and Hit," said 2nd Lt. Court Rape, a 24-year-old platoon commander with the battalion's D Company, which spearheaded the recent counterinsurgency operation. "All of them are known terrorists. Two are very substantial targets linked to executions of truck drivers."

Some U.S. military officials here believe that this portion of Iraq serves as a "staging ground" for insurgents — a supply artery which stems from western Al Anbar Province and runs east to the province's larger cities, such as Ramadi, Fallujah, Haqlaniyah and even Baghdad.

According to the battalion's executive officer, Maj. Ken Kassner, insurgents in the region hijack trucks and kidnap people for ransom. The money gained from these tactics funds the insurgency in more active parts of the country, like Ramadi.

"Hopefully people can

drive the route without fear of being hijacked (now)," added Rape, a native of College Station, Texas.

The capture of 21 of those insurgents means more security, and better economy, to the region.

"We definitely put a dent in the insurgency," said Rape. "These guys are responsible for transporting people and materials to Hit and Ramadi. Now honest people can fill the recently open jobs at and around the gas station."

Rutbah, a town of 30,000, is the largest city within the battalion's area of responsibility. The Marines say the city is a notorious smuggler's town due to its location along the main road connecting the western and eastern portion of the province. The intersection of the main routes from Jordan and Syria lead to Rutbah, play a crucial role in the stability of the region.

Just recently, Marine and Iraqi military leaders have managed to establish relations with Rutbah's local leaders — a step in the right direction to not only maintaining security in the region, but to improving local living conditions, according to the Marines.

Lt. Col. Matt Jones, 3rd LAR's commander, met with local political, tribal and religious leaders just a few weeks ago to discuss on-going issues and concerns of the local populace.

It was the first meeting between the Marines and local leadership in three months.

"It is hard to find leadership when the insurgents are effectively threatening the populous," said Jones, a 39-year-old from Louisville, Ky. "(But) the security climate is improving in the city and leadership has stood up, and that is what this is all about — the Iraqis stepping up and taking control."

While the area is steadily improving, security of the region's main roads is one of the battalion's top priorities,



Coalition Forces screen an Iraqi man near a gas station between the cities of Ramadi and Rutbah, Iraq.

said Jones. Safe highways are crucial to stability, he said.

"Commerce goes along (the roads) and stops at the gas stations," said Jones. "If anything hinders that, then life gets harder for everyone, and people are more prone to turning to crime and the insurgency to provide for their families."

The area's three gas stations, all of which are located along the main road leading from western Al Anbar to eastern Al Anbar, play a key role in insurgent operations, said Jones. Insurgents use the gas stations as safe havens to plan future operations.

By stopping the insurgency in and around one of the gas stations, Coalition and Iraqi Security Forces can cut off the insurgents' cross-country communications and supply routes, said Rape.

Now, locals can work at the various shops and markets along this vast stretch of

desert — honest people, working honest jobs, as the Marines put it.

"The insurgents were really ingrained in that location," said Rape. "They were operating and living in the area. Some worked at the gas station and shops in the surrounding area because the shop owners had to help out of fear of what the insurgents might do."

The battalion is scheduled to return to the United States later this year. They will be replaced by another U.S.-based Marine LAR battalion.

CPL. GRAHAM A. PAULSGROVE,

3rd LAR Combat engineers valuable asset to U.S., Iraqi security operations

CPL. GRAHAM A. PAULSGROVE
3RD LAR

CAMP KOREAN VILLAGE, Iraq — While sectarian violence appears to be on the rise in other areas of Iraq, Marines in western Al Anbar province are beefing up security at U.S. military camps here, which will eventually be turned over to Iraqi Forces.

A team of Marine combat engineers attached to 3rd Light Armored Reconnaissance Battalion spent the past several months keeping roads free of improvised explosive devices and strengthening buildings and forward operating bases to keep U.S. and Iraqi military forces secure in this region.

“We’re jacks of all trades,” said Cpl. Joshua T. Raney, a 21-year-old combat engineer attached to the

battalion’s engineer detachment. “Without us, a lot of weapons caches, and IEDs would not have been found, and a lot of stuff wouldn’t have been built- we just make things a little easier for everyone.”

The engineers, trained in demolition, mine detection, and construction, operate in this vast desert stretching from the Jordanian border about 120 miles east towards the Euphrates River.

Most of the engineers’ time is focused on beefing up security measures at the various U.S. military bases throughout Anbar’s western desert region. In January, engineers built an eight-foot high dirt berm around Rutbah to curb smuggling and insurgent activity.

To gain access to or leave this city of 25,000, vehicles must pass through one of

three traffic control points, which are manned by Iraqi soldiers, ensuring everything that goes in and comes out is screened- limiting insurgent activity.

Rutbah is considered by U.S. military officials in Iraq as a strategic location for insurgents and smugglers, since it is located astride two main supply routes — one from Jordan, and one from Syria. Traveling east from the Syrian or Jordanian border, the supply routes lead through Rutbah and continue on to the heart of the Sunni Triangle — Ar Ramadi, Al Fallujah, and Baghdad.

Furthermore, with the gradual turnover of areas of responsibility to Iraqi forces, the engineers have focused some of their efforts on fortifying Iraqi border forts and fighting positions throughout western Al Anbar province. In Akashat, a small town near the Iraqi-Syrian border, the engineers built several bunkers so Iraqi soldiers could monitor the town’s traffic.

“Our job is to make sure the guys standing post have a strong and safe position- they depend on us for it,” said Raney, who is on his second deployment to Iraq. “While this is a relatively quiet [area], you never know when something bad might happen.”

Rutbah’s three entrances and exits are controlled by Iraqi soldiers, supervised by Marines from the battalion- since its construction; it has received a few improvements by the current crop of engineers.

“We added a lane for water trucks at [the most heavily trafficked entrance] and took four days to rein-

force a few gaps in the berm,” said Cpl. Shane R. McConnell, 23, from Rosebush, Mich. “The good people in Rutbah have no problems with going through the checkpoints to get in and out of town, but the ones up to no good, they are looking for the spots in the berm to try and get out undetected.”

But McConnell says his and the rest of the detachment’s actions are making sneaking in and out of the city more difficult, “by adding a few barriers and a lot of dirt.”

In addition to the fortifications, combat engineers are keeping coalition forces safer by disposing of unexploded ordnance. Since their arrival in March, the engineers disposed of more than 500 pounds of ordnance — mortars, rockets, bombs, and other munitions.

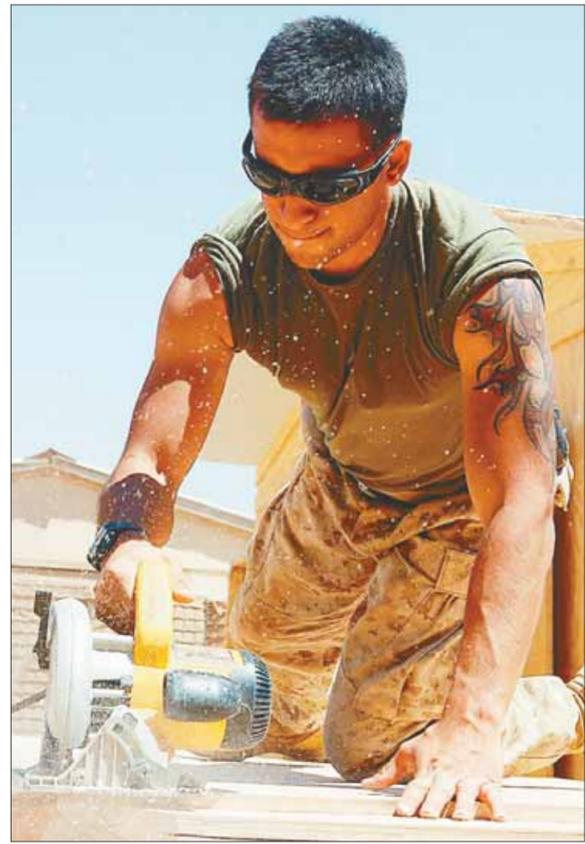
“We’re cutting down on the insurgents’ munitions,” said Raney. “For every piece we blow up, that is one less IED.”

McConnell, the detachment’s sole heavy equipment operator, says his job is crucial in to the battalion’s various construction and fortification projects.

“Without me, 3rd LAR would have a lot of shoveling to do,” said McConnell with a grin.

The combat engineer detachment, completing tasks usually performed by a 30-man engineer platoon, makes up in experience what it lacks in sheer numbers.

“[The battalion] was lucky to get such an experienced and well-trained group of Marines,” said Capt. John C. Morgan, 27, the battalion’s engineer officer. “Not only do they bring their engineer set of skills to the table, but are also able to assimilate with [the infantrymen] and serve as provisional riflemen



PL. GRAHAM A. PAULSGROVE

Cpl. Bryan D. Escobedo cuts lumber for use in the construction of bunkers at Camp Korean Village, Iraq.

at the same time.”

Playing the role of the infantryman is crucial to the mission of the engineer, and those skills have come into play for a few of the detachment’s members, said Morgan.

“When we were in Habbinayah, there was a high level of contact, every day something would happen,” said Cpl. Paul Kozlowski, from Bowie, Md., a combat engineer. “[Engineers] attached to grunt units are generally at the tip of the spear. We make sure people can get where they need to go, be it inside a house or over a bridge, we can’t do our job sitting on base- we

have to be proficient as infantrymen to do our job.”

Sometimes, their job requires them to bring the muscle to breach doors and allow Coalition and Iraqi Forces to enter buildings by force to search for insurgents, but most operations don’t require such force.

“We have found that the doors are usually unlocked,” said Morgan. “We try to minimize collateral damage as much as possible.”

With their deployment coming to an end, the detachment will head back to their home base in Camp Lejeune, N.C., knowing they helped support both U.S. and Iraqi military forces.

“I know my work and the work of [the engineers] has had an effect on the future of Iraq,” said McConnell. “We are keeping Marines safe, Iraqis safe, Iraqi soldiers safe and the town of Rutbah stays quiet because insurgents know they can’t get their stuff in or out.”



LANCE CPL. REGINA N. ORTIZ

Stay Bug-Free

Marines from 3rd Battalion, 14th Marine Regiment, a provisional military police unit, lay out their desert camouflage utilities to prepare for a spraying of insect repellent. The repellent, Permethrin, is used Department of Defense-wide and is effective for more than 50 washes, according to a press release by the DoD in March. The unit from Philadelphia is training at the Combat Center before their departure to Iraq.



Fatigued Driving: Beware the Big Sleep

After working a 10-hour shift, a seaman stopped at her apartment before heading out to complete an automobile purchase, and to get a temporary base pass. She was driving west in the right lane of an interstate highway when she sideswiped a car in the left lane. She then overcorrected and swerved across a grassy median. As her vehicle spun into eastbound traffic, another car slammed into the driver's-side door. A rescue technician pronounced her dead at the scene.

Fatigue undoubtedly played a part in this tragedy. According to a roommate and a coworker, the victim had been awake about 26 hours when the mishap occurred. The roads also were damp from a light drizzle. The U.S. National Highway Traffic Safety Administration estimates that approximately 100,000 police-reported crashes annually involve fatigue as a principal causal factor. A conservative estimate of related fatalities is 1,500 annually or 4 percent of all traffic-crash fatalities. At least 71,000 people are injured in fall-asleep crashes each year. Monetary losses from these crashes, according to the NHTSA, amount to about \$12.5 billion annually.

If you're about to fall asleep, you'll experience some or all of these symptoms:

- You have trouble keeping your eyes open and focused.
- You nod and can't keep your head up.
- You daydream or have wandering, disconnected thoughts.
- You yawn a lot or need to rub your eyes.
- You find yourself drifting out of your lane or tailgating.
- You miss road signs or drive past your turn.
- You feel irritable, restless and impatient.

- On an interstate, you drift off the road and hit the rumble strips.

What can you do to counter drowsy driving?

- Get a good night's sleep. While this varies among individuals, the average person requires about eight hours of sleep a night.
- Plan to drive long trips with a companion. Passengers can help look for early warning signs of fatigue and switch drivers when needed. Passengers should stay awake to talk to the driver.
- Schedule regular stops, every 100 miles or two hours.
- Avoid alcohol and medications (over-the-counter and prescription) that may impair performance. Alcohol interacts with fatigue, increasing its effects—just like drinking on an empty stomach.
- Consult your physician or a local sleep-disorder center for diagnosis and treatment if you suffer frequent daytime sleepiness, often have difficulty sleeping at night, or snore loudly every night.

For more information, refer to these websites:

- Sea&Shore Fall 2004, "Work Zone: Drowsy Driving": <http://safetycenter.navy.mil/media/seashore/issues/fall04/drowsydriving.htm>
- Ashore Winter 2002, "Are You Getting Enough Sleep?": <http://safetycenter.navy.mil/media/ashore/issues/winter02/areyou.htm>
- Ashore Fall 2003, "Drowsy Driving: The Road to Tragedy": <http://www.safetycenter.navy.mil/media/ashore/issues/fall03/drowsy.htm>
- AAA Foundation for Traffic Safety Fact Sheet for the Survey of Police Officers about the Public's Drowsy Driving Behavior: <http://www.aaafoundation.org/multimedia/index.cfm?button=PoliceDDFS>
- National Safety Council Distracted Driving fact sheet: <http://www.nsc.org/nsm/drowsy.htm>



LANCE CPL. REGINA N. ORTIZ
Pfc. Jaron C. Meadows, pictured at a Marine Corps Ball, died in an auto accident July 16.

MEMORIAL, from A1

and positive attitude he put into the sport was just a small example of what he put forth every day, in every situation, said Huff.

"We'll miss his enthusiasm for life in general," he said. "He gave 150 percent in everything he did; work, football, making someone laugh or smile."

Meadows was returning from leave, driving through Arizona, with his new wife, Stephanie, when the accident happened. No further details were released about the accident, but his wife survived.

"I got the call the night the accident happened," said Harris. "It still doesn't seem real. The sidelines won't be the same without him."

"His body may be gone, but his spirit will be with us on the sideline,

smiling, encouraging his teammates, taunting the opposition," Harris continued.

Huff remembers receiving the news the next morning at football practice, and the silence that fell over the entire team.

"It was unbelievable," he said. "There's just this unexplainable emptiness we all feel right now. Things like this don't happen to people like him."

The football team retired his number, 22, from the MCCES team. His jersey will be framed near his unit's office.

The team will wear his number on their helmets this season in memory of Meadows.

"We'll be playing for him this year," said Huff. "This season is dedicated to him. We're going to win like he would've wanted us to."



LANCE CPL. REGINA N. ORTIZ
Sgt. Nathan J. Huff, Meadows' teammate, and Col. Marshall I. Considine, Marine Corps Communication-Electronics School commanding officer, retire Meadows' Intramural Football jersey in memory of him.

1/7, U.S. Army build bridge to boost Iraqi economy

CPL. ANTONIO ROSAS
REGIMENTAL COMBAT TEAM 7

KARABILAH, Iraq — Thousands of Iraqis from Euphrates River villages near the Iraq-Syria border now have access to the cities of Husaybah and Karabilah, thanks to a new — albeit temporary — bridge constructed by Coalition Forces recently.

The bridge will serve to bolster the economy in cities along the border as well as improve security in the region, according to Lt. Col. Nicholas F. Marano, commanding officer of 1st Battalion, 7th Marine Regiment.

The new bridge is a temporary floating bridge normally used by U.S. military forces to provide a temporary solution to move convoys across rivers.

“Now the Iraqis who live north of the Euphrates River can contribute to the economy here by obtaining necessities at the local markets and get medical care from the hospital in Husaybah,” said Marano. “The building of this bridge is a milestone in the progress of Coalition Forces.”

Nearly 30 regional sheikhs attended the July 23, 2006, ribbon-cutting ceremony, accompanied by city officials from neighboring towns and cities as well as Iraqi Security Force commanders.

“Now that the bridge is in place we can expect the added traffic to improve the business in the shops in Karabilah and Husaybah,” said Tekan Farfan Tekan, the mayor of Husaybah — a city of about 50,000 on the Iraq-Syria border. “I want to thank the Marines, the Army, (and) the Iraqi Security Forces for making this day possible.”

Before the bridge was erected, Iraqis who live north of the Euphrates River here had to pay to cross the river in crudely-built canoes. Locals had to hike nearly a mile to and from the river and then obtain a ride from a taxi to shop in the cities of Husaybah or Karabilah.

This is nearly impossible for the elderly and sick, according to several Iraqi fishermen who provide the ferry service to locals for a fee.

“It is hard for many people to make this trip and many people don’t have the extra money to pay for the ride,” said a local fisherman, through an interpreter.

The fisherman said he has ferried people across the river for no charge since many locals simply can’t afford the cost of crossing the river by boat.

The new bridge replaced an older bridge which was destroyed more than a year ago during combat operations. U.S. soldiers from the Fort Hood, Texas-based 74th Engineer Multi-Role Bridge Company removed the remains of the old bridge and put together the new one.

“The security in this region has changed for the better,” Al Anbar Province Governor Maamoon Sami Rasheed al-Awani told local leaders here at a meeting earlier this month. “Without the work the Iraqi Army and Iraqi police are doing here, we would not be able to move forward with construction projects.”

Since their arrival in early March, the Marines say they have seen a decrease in enemy activity in the region — a result of a consistent U.S. and Iraqi military presence and several new Iraqi police stations in the cities, with more than 600 Iraqi police officers now on the job.

Iraqi soldiers provided security during the month-long con-



Lt. Col. Nicholas F. Marano, commanding officer of 1st Battalion, 7th Marine Regiment, is accompanied by several Iraqi Security Force commanders and the mayor of Karabilah, Iraq, as they cross a newly-constructed bridge over the Euphrates River in Karabilah, Iraq.

struction of the temporary bridge — another step closer for Iraqi Security Forces to relieve U.S. forces of security operations in the Province.

Still, the newly-constructed bridge was the target of several foiled improvised explosive device attacks by insurgents recently.

U.S. forces discovered the first IED before it went off.

In a separate IED attack, a roadside bomb detonated near a convoy of U.S. military engineers while they were on their way to the bridge’s construction site.

The bomb caused no damage to the bridge or the engineers.

Security for the bridge will remain in the hands of Iraqi Security Forces. Nearby along the river, Marines maintain an outpost, or battle position, alongside Iraqi soldiers. On the north side of the river, an Iraqi police station recently opened, marking another milestone for local Iraqi Security Forces in becoming a self-sustaining force.

“It’s important that the Iraqi soldiers continue to provide security at the bridge alongside Marines because the locals will see that it’s the Iraqis who are beginning to take the lead in providing security for their own people,” said Capt. John W. Black, commanding officer of Weapons Company — the Marines responsible for working with the Iraqi Security Forces

in the area near the bridge.

The new bridge will also help with the distribution of fuel shipment to villages north of the river, according to Marano. Fuel distribution is another problem Iraqis here face and Marano feels the bridge will help get the fuel where it’s needed.

“The placement of this bridge will solve some problems until the permanent bridge can be replaced,” said Marano. “The Iraqis who live north of the river can now get medical care in the city.”

The completion of the bridge is just one example of the success of Coalition Forces and Iraqi Security Forces working together to improve the overall security in the area, allowing future construction projects to take place, said Marano.

The reconstruction of another, more permanent bridge is scheduled for construction later this fall, according to Marine officials here. That bridge’s construction is at the top of Marano’s priority list, as local tribal leaders have rallied for its reconstruction since the southern California-based battalion arrived here nearly five months ago, he said.

“The tribal leaders were always bringing it up at monthly regional council meetings and it was one of the most important projects for the Marines, next to improving the security in the region,” said Marano, a Philadelphia native.

SPORT SHORTS

MOMMY AND BABY AEROBICS

MCCS Aerobics has added a new Mommy and Baby Aerobics Class every Monday and Tuesday at 12:30 p.m. in the Community Center. Come and enjoy fitness for you and fun for your baby. For more information please call 830-4131.

PILATES CLASS

MCCS Aerobics has added a Pilates Class every Tuesday at 5:30 p.m. and every Thursday at 9 a.m. in the Community Center. Build core strength and flexibility with this exciting Pilates class. For more information please call 830-4131.

LEISURE

TOWN HALL MEETING

Residents of Vista del Sol (801) housing area are invited to attend a town hall meeting Thursday at the Community Center, building 1004, from 6 - 8 p.m., to discuss their housing concerns with housing managers.

SUMMER FAMILY FUN FESTIVAL AT THE MAIN EXCHANGE

The Main Exchange will hold their annual Summer Family Fun Festival, August 11 from 3:30 to 7:30 p.m. Enter and win super prizes, including face painting and a clown.

APOSTOLIC PENTECOSTAL SERVICES

Apostolic Pentecostal Services will be held at the Protestant Chapel, Sunday at 3:30 p.m. and on Thursday at 6:30 p.m. For more information call Titus R. Burns at 368-3425.

RING FOUND

A wedding ring was found at the base theater July 23. It was found near the concession stand. Call 830-6701 or 367-6556 to describe and claim.

SUMMER MOVIE MATINEES FOR KIDS AND FAMILIES

The Community Center will be hosting Summer Movie Matinees every Friday through August 18. Admission and popcorn are free. Food and covered drinks are allowed. All movies are G or PG rated. The list of movies is as follows:
Today: Shark Tale
Aug. 11: Chronicles of Namia
Aug. 18: The Incredibles
For more information call 830-3380.

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.

Cancer survivor thankful for overwhelming support



Staff Sgt. Diane Durden, Headquarters Battalion, B Company Gunnery Sergeant, was diagnosed with Breast Cancer in February. Durden thanks all those who support and motivate her during these trying times.

CPL. HEIDI E. LOREDO
COMBAT CORRESPONDENT

Staff Sgt. Diane Durden glows with vitality and good humor, despite having breast cancer. With support from family, friends and even strangers, she thanks all those who inspire her and continue to motivate her during this trying time.

At the age of 40 and with no family history of the disease, Durden, the Headquarters Battalion, Bravo Company gunnery sergeant, doesn't seem like a typical breast cancer patient.

But after feeling a lump in her breast in December, Durden, a 19-year veteran of the Corps, prepared herself for the worst. On February 8 while in the doctor's office, Durden absorbed the news that she did in fact have breast cancer.

"I think when I found the lump, that's when it was more dramatic for me," said Durden, a Fremont, Calif., native. "Mentally I was prepared for it, but I was probably in a little bit of denial too."

After confiding her illness to family and friends, Durden prepared herself for the next step, chemotherapy. Two months after Durden was diagnosed, close friend Master Gunnery Sgt. Cheryl Gillon, G-3, decided she too would lose her hair. On May 6, Gillon raced in the Susan G. Komen Breast Cancer Foundation, "Race for the Cure" in Las Vegas, organized by a beneficial charity which raises money for breast cancer awareness, education, research, and support programs in the local area. To support her friend, and to raise money for the foundation, Gillon gave away the opportunity for contributors to shave her head.

"The timing got a little bit off because it was initially scheduled so that we'd be bald at the same time after I started my chemo treatment," said Durden.

Personnel and students with Charlie Company, Marine Corps Communications-Electronics School supported the cause with a squad formation run and did their own fundraising. All together, more than \$3,200 was raised for the foundation.

Durden also took part in the race. However, she opted to walk. Prior to her illness she participated in several marathons. Ironically, the blue-eyed Durden was given her diagnosis while raising funds for a leukemia marathon she was to participate in.

Durden underwent chemotherapy through intravenous injections every three weeks for four months and as a result lost her hair.

"I knew that was a 99 percent possibility, I just didn't know when to expect it," said Durden, mother of a 20-year-old son. "It was very dull and it had an unhealthy look to it. At first it was a few strands, but the second day after it started to fall out I was washing my hair and had a big blob of it in my hands.

After the third day, with only 1/3 of her hair left, Durden shaved her head. "It was sad because I knew it was something that I had to go through," said Durden, who opted not to wear a wig because of the heat.

Today, the lump in her breast is shrunk to the point where she can no longer feel it. Doctors will remove what is left in the upcoming months and say her hair will begin to grow back approximately three weeks from the last treatment as soon as the medications stop having an affect,

See RECOVERY, B2

801 residents brave heat



The heat proved to be too much for some residents of Vista del Sol as they broke housing rules and installed air conditioners in their homes for relief. Although housing claims to have cited all homes with air conditioners, several claimed they had not received a citation.

CPL. HEIDI E. LOREDO
COMBAT CORRESPONDENT

Soaring 112-degree Fahrenheit temperatures sent Combat Center residents seeking cooler shelter throughout July as the region experienced a blast of scorching heat and stifling humidity not common to this area.

Luckily, most base housing residents endured the blistering temperatures inside their homes, newly equipped with central air conditioning thanks to Public Private Venture.

However, Vista del Sol residents were not as lucky as the sweltering heat lingered indoors raising the temperatures to over 90 degrees in many homes.

"It was hot. End of story," said Andrea Walters, resident of Vista del Sol. "It's not fair that all the Marines on base sleep comfortable with air conditioning while we're here sweating literally day and night. The fact that we don't get

air conditioning isn't the only thing that upsets me, it's that they tell us to buy more fans for the home. Why don't they buy them for us?"

Ray Zapata, housing administrative officer explains there are many behind the scenes facts that residents need to understand.

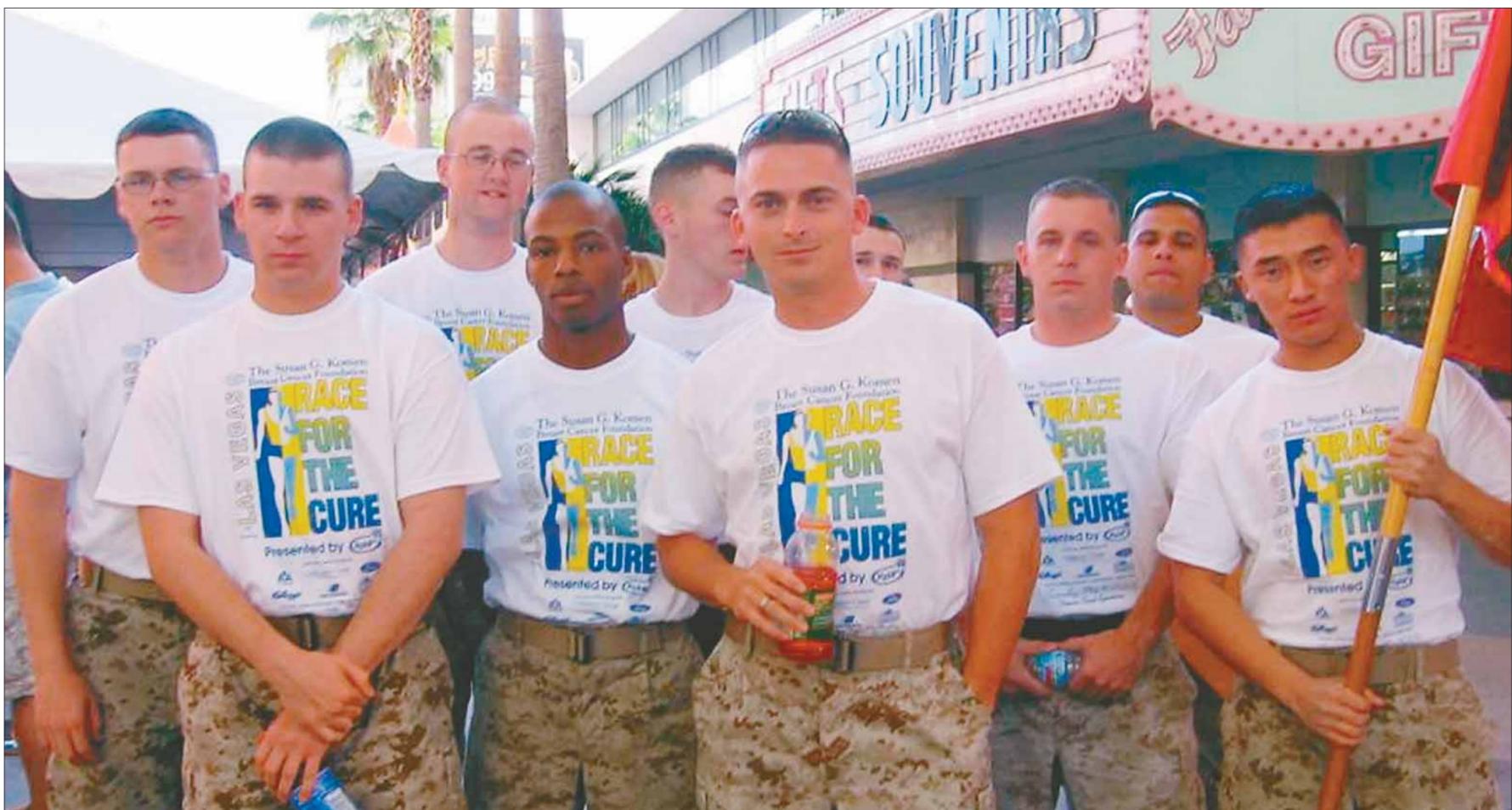
The property which Vista del Sol sits on is not owned by the Combat Center or the government. In 1993 the government entered into a 20-year lease agreement with the property owner.

After the conflict in the Middle East in the early 90s, the base began to grow immensely, and families needed suitable housing. The government quickly turned to a private company to build 600 units immediately, and 18 months later 600 housing units were open for families. The homes were equipped with swamp coolers, not air conditioners. The coolers are effective for cooling in desert areas during hot temperatures and low humidity.

See 801, B3

Did You Know?

Before 1859, baseball umpires were seated in padded chairs behind home plate.



CPL. HEIDI E. LOREDO

Marine Corps Communications-Electronics School, Class ADSMC 1-06, participated in the "Race for the Cure" to raise funds for the Susan G. Komen Breast Cancer Foundation and to support Staff Sgt. Diane Durden who is ill with breast cancer.

RECOVERY, from B1

although Durden has grown accustomed to her peach fuzz head. Now, she will undergo radiation therapy five days a week for six weeks and plans to hopefully maintain a regular work schedule.

"The biggest thing I encounter is 'What did you do to your hair,'" said Durden with a smile. "I remember a recent encounter after I told him what was wrong, he asked, 'You're not going through this alone are you?' I looked around the room full of Marines and I said, 'I have

all these people here.' That's the big thing; no matter what any Marine is going through we're not alone."

Throughout this whole tribulation, Durden was never worried whether she would be able to remain in the Corps, but she was worried about how effective

she'd be as a Marine.

"I know I'm going to be cured," she said. "In the meantime I'm worried about my [physical fitness tests] and doing Marine things that we're expected to do as Marines."

Despite her illness Durden exercises four to five days a

week and works a normal schedule.

She has an awesome spirit," said Gillon. "I don't know how to describe it. She's the most determined woman I've ever met. It makes me want to get up off the couch."

Lance Cpl. Scott Ellison

has known Durden since late 2004 and describes her as having a great deal of courage and defiance over the illness. He says she personifies the old Marine Corps saying, "If you don't mind, it doesn't matter."

"It's one of those 'bad things happen to good people' deals," said Ellison. "It's of course a random thing that is in no way preventable. Other than her hair falling out, you would have no idea anything was wrong with her. Somehow she saw through the negative and turned it all into positive energy. She still kept PT-ing once, sometimes twice a day. I don't even want to PT more than zero times a day."

Durden insists on being open about her illness, but in doing so, provides the motivation needed for others who are stricken with the disease as well.

"I've talked to other people who are in the same situation and it's given them strength," said Durden. "People have told me it helps to know that someone is going through the same thing. I'm open about that, and the more I'm open then maybe it will help someone else."

Looking back, this experience has been an ordeal that has yielded unexpected rewards. Going through an illness such as hers changes a person profoundly.

"I appreciate the relationships I have more so, especially people close to me," said Durden. "I try to make sure they know they're important and why. I wake up every morning and thank God I get another day."

Durden is appreciative when acquaintances offer assistance, but it is the people she's never met who offer help that amaze her.

"People are very supportive," said Gillon, who exercises with Durden almost daily to train for upcoming marathons. "She has total strangers passing her notes telling her to keep the faith. It's pretty amazing."

"Thank you" is all Durden can say to people who contribute both monetarily to the foundation and with moral support as she greatly appreciates it.

"We're always asking Marines for money and they're always good causes," said Durden. "With our cause, we had a couple of individuals that gave a couple hundred dollars. And that dollar donation is just as valuable as the \$200 donation because everything is a sacrifice."

"I'd like everyone to know how grateful I am for their support, thoughts and prayers to help me get through this," said Durden. "I couldn't do this without them. There's no way."

Vanpools making morning commutes easier



LANCE CPL. KATELYN A. KNAUER

Vans similar to these may be used for vanpools, which some service members at the Combat Center are trying to create.

LANCE CPL. KATELYN A. KNAUER
COMBAT CORRESPONDENT

The roads are congested, gas prices are at an all time high, and drivers begin their morning commute to work still a little sleepy as the miles click on their odometer and more wear and tear is put on their personal vehicle.

Because of this, the Combat Center is looking to develop a vanpool that shuttles military members and federal Department of the Navy civilian employees from the Palm Springs, Morongo Valley, Yucca Valley and Joshua Tree areas.

Vanpools are recognized under the Department of the Navy's Transportation Incentive Program and participants are eligible for reimbursement up to \$105 a month. TIP is designed to pay for transit costs incurred by personnel in their local commute from residence to permanent duty station, according to the TIP Web site.

"For people who live downhill, this is a great program," said James Walters, Telecommunication Specialist. "Not only does it save the wear on your car, it's environmentally friendly too."

Commuter bus and train, subways and light rail, ferry foot passengers and vanpools are recognized mass transportation systems that qualify for the benefit, according to the TIP Web site. Carpooling, using a personal vehicle, riding a motorcycle, bicycling and walking do not qualify for reimbursement.

"If you get enough people you can trade off driving, and whoever lives the furthest can take the van home and pick up people on the way," said Walters. "Also, if you get a number of Marines in one shop together that want to vanpool together, they can have their own vanpool."

TIP is made available to help reduce daily contribution to traffic congestion and air pollution, as well as expand commuting alternatives, according to the Web site.

"It's improved, authorized, environmentally friendly and it saves money," said Walters.

For more information about vanpools contact James Walters at 830-6500 or by email at james.d.walters@usmc.mil.

801, from B1

The way a swamp cooler works is different from an air conditioner. A pad in the swamp cooler is soaked with water. Air passes through the pad and is delivered to the home through vents. Swamp coolers perform best at humidity levels of no higher than 25 percent. The lower the humidity the better they work.

"Ten years ago and beyond, the coolers worked really well," said Zapata. "But what we're seeing is a change in the desert where the humidity levels are starting to come up."

Swamp coolers will cool to about 25 degrees cooler than the outside temperatures. If the temperature outside is 112, like it was during the last week in July, then the temperature indoors with a swamp cooler should be no higher than 87 degrees providing the stove, dishwasher or dryer is not on.

"We were over 15 percent humidity," said Zapata. "For the desert, that's unheard of. Humidity and triple digit temperatures spell disaster for swamp coolers and their effectiveness, ultimately failing miserably. I'm not going to argue that point at all."

Last year the Corps partnered with private companies to build more and better housing for the same money. The privatization focused on the replacement, renovation, maintenance and operation of existing government housing.

But PPV didn't reach the 801 housing area because the land is not owned by the government, leaving Vista del Sol residents on the sidelines as upgrades were done to homes on base, to include installation of air conditioners. This summer, air conditioners sprung up in the 801 housing area as residents could not brave the heat wave, although housing policy strictly prohibits them.

"What folks don't understand is when that property was built 12 to 15 years ago it was built on an electrical grid that supports swamp coolers," said Zapata. "Swamp coolers are inherently cheaper to run than air conditioners. That electric grid was built for 600 swamp coolers. Now introduce to that hundreds of AC units."

Zapata further stated if

family housing does not cite residents who broke rules and installed air conditioners, then more families will follow by example.

"At some point that grid will go down if we allow A/Cs," said Zapata. "Is it fair that your next door neighbor cools his house off while you are abiding by the rules?"

Window A/Cs in Vista del Sol are limited to families registered with the Exceptional Family Member Program and have a documented health requirement for an air conditioner. Even though that rule is set in stone for residents, housing managers who work on the Vista del Sol premises have three air conditioners installed in each building for their comfort.

"Nothing would please me more than to be able to provide all of our military families with A/C," said Zapata. "Unfortunately that isn't possible right now."

There is currently an \$8 million request pending at Headquarters Marine Corps to install central air conditioning into the housing units.

"There are a lot of restraints because we don't own that property and the government has been restricted to make any improvements to property they don't own," said Zapata.

The project to upgrade to air conditioning will include electrical grid upgrades, but if approved this project will begin in Fiscal year 2007 and end in 2008.

In the meantime, residents will agree that swamp coolers are better than nothing. Family housing encourages resi-

dents to purchase fans, thick window curtains, avoid strenuous labor, and also avoid using the stove, clothes dryer and dishwasher during the hottest time of the day, usually between 12 and 4 p.m.

"So basically when we get home from work, we can't cook our dinners, do the dishes or wash our clothes, and that should make our house nice and cool," said Walters.

Family housing encour-

ages residents to call maintenance if they feel there is a problem with a swamp cooler. The day maintenance number is 361-1086, and after hours 272-1993 or 272-1995.

Residents of Vista del Sol (801) housing area are invited to attend a town hall meeting Thursday at the Community Center, building 1004, from 6 to 8 p.m. to discuss their housing concerns with housing managers.

Family housing recently

mailed the second annual Resident Satisfaction Survey in the mail. The housing office asks that residents complete the enclosed survey. The Vista Del Sol neighborhood results are to be tabulated and reports are to be provided to Headquarters Marine Corps and the Housing Office for review and appropriate action. The deadline to mail your survey is August 14, 2006.

One other way to comment

on the living quarters is through ICE, Interactive Customer Evaluation, which can be found at the Combat Center's Web site, <http://www.29palms.usmc.mil>.



Hot Topics

SPIRIT OF AMERICA TOUR PRESENTS THE CHARLIE DANIELS BAND

The Spirit of America Tour presents a free concert with The Charlie Daniels Band, Monday from 8 to 9:30 p.m. at Victory Field. There will be concession's available. No outside alcohol is allowed, and don't forget to bring your own chair. The uniform for this event is desert utilities. After 5 p.m., Victory Field and the surrounding area will be a no salute area. For more information, call 830-5086.



LANCE CPL. KATELYN A. KNAUER

Going for the steal

Denneny Cochran of 3/7 steals the ball away from Sean Campbell of 3/11 during the Commanding General's Intramural Soccer League championship Tuesday at Felix Field.

Full story and photos next week.

PURPLE HEART RECIPIENTS ARE INVITED

Marines and Sailors who have received the Purple Heart are invited to a luncheon at Phelps Mess Hall, Bldg. 1420, sponsored by the Robert E. Bush Military Order of the Purple Heart Chapter 2929, Monday from 11 a.m. to 1 p.m.. The chapter will be informing service members about the Military Order of the Purple Heart and what it has to offer. There will also be a static display of the new armored humvees, along with ordnance vehicles including tanks, light armored vehicles, assault amphibious vehicles and howitzers. For more information, contact Steven Dell at 830-8203 or via e-mail at steven.dell@usmc.mil, or Sgt. Mark Novello at 830-3001 or Mark.novello@usmc.mil. Wives, mothers, daughters, step-daughters and adopted daughters of Purple Heart recipients are eligible to belong to the Ladies' Auxiliary of the Military Order of the Purple Heart, which also does important work nationally and locally in Veterans' Hospitals.

COMBINED FEDERAL CAMPAIGN

The Combined Federal Campaign is the annual fund-raising drive conducted by Federal employees in their workplace each fall. Federal employees and military personnel pledged \$268.5 million during last year's CFC campaign, which benefits thousands of non-profit charities. CFC is organized into more than 300 independent geographic campaigns.

WHAT IS THE CFC MISSION?

To promote and support humanity through a program that is employee focused, cost-efficient, and effective in providing all federal employees the opportunity to improve the quality of life for all. For more information about the CFC, visit <http://www.opm.gov/cfc/>

