

Serving the MCAGCC
Community at
Twentynine Palms, Calif.

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1/7 RETURNS, A3

OBSERVATION POST



CFC KICKOFF, B3

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THIS ISSUE

A3 – 9/11 Anniversary

A12 – Unexploded Ordnances

B2 – Learning Resource Center

HOT TOPICS

BEWARE USING THE MAINSIDE RIDGELINE AREA FOR PT

The Marine Corps Communication-Electronics School now trains entry-level field radio operators how to drive humvees. The HMMWV course is conducted parallel to the Mainside ridgeline from the very early hours of each weekday morning until noon. All units and personnel using the Mainside ridgeline area for training are advised to be aware of the vehicles and stay off of the paths marked as part of the course. Units interested in using the course for HMMWV training should contact Chief Warrant Officer 3 James Graham, or Staff Sgt. William Mordelle at 830-6636.

2ND ANNUAL WOOD AND CRAFT FAIR

Marine Corps Community Services and the Wood Hobby Shop are hosting the 2nd Annual Wood and Craft Fair Sept. 30. Deadline for sign up is today. The event is for MCAGCC patrons to show and sell their homemade crafts and woodworking projects. The day will also include prize giveaways, craft contests and a variety of craft and woodworking demonstrations and classes. There is no fee for opening a booth at the fair. Those interested in selling and displaying homemade crafts who would like to have a booth at the fair should call 830-7214.

BALL GOWN TRUNK SHOW & SALE

The Marine Corps Exchange will host the Ball Gown Trunk Show today from 4 to 8 p.m. The sale will feature 20 percent off all ball gowns, accessories, evening purses and shoes.

COMING NEXT ISSUE

- MCCES Humvee Training
- SMP Trip
- Quality of Life Expo

THIS DAY IN MARINE CORPS HISTORY

September 15, 1950

The 1st Marine Division under the command of Major General Oliver P. Smith landed at Inchon and began the Inchon-Seoul campaign.

Lima 3/12 readies for war



Marines from Gun 5, Lima Battery, 3rd Battalion, 12th Marine Regiment, plug their ears while firing a round from an M198 Howitzer during their final shoot Sept. 7 at the Combat Center's Lead Mountain range.

CPL. EVAN M. EAGAN
COMBAT CORRESPONDENT

Lima Battery, 3rd Battalion, 12th Marine Regiment, conducted a re-familiarization shoot Sept. 6 and 7, at the Combat Center's Lead Mountain training area to prepare for their upcoming deployment in support of Operation Iraqi Freedom later this month.

Because they have been using the new M777 Lightweight Howitzer since last year, the battery headed to the field with six M198 Howitzers, the gun they will be using in Iraq.

"We held this shoot to get re-familiarized with the one-niner-eight [M198 Howitzer] because it's been a while since we shot these," said Staff Sgt.

Christopher Demosthenous, section leader. "Since we're going to be using these in Iraq, they wanted to get us back into the swing of things."

In addition to reacquainting the Marines with the M198, the battery also conducted split battery operations, where two separate fire direction control centers were set up to control different gun sections, said Demosthenous, a Long Island, N.Y., native.

On the first day, the Mojave Desert sun relentlessly beat down on the Marines and sailors, however, the evening was filled with rain, and an electrical storm eventually made them stop firing for more than four hours.

See LIMA 3/12, A12



LANCE CPL. MICHAEL S. CIFUENTES
Annapolis, Md., native, Staff Sgt. Jason D. Giles, an engineer equipment operator with Marine Wing Support Squadron 374, holds 4-month old daughter, Kinsey, for the first time after he returned to the Combat Center from Iraq Sept. 6.

MWSS-374 returns to Combat Center

LANCE CPL. MICHAEL S.
CIFUENTES
COMBAT CORRESPONDENT

Over a period of seven months, Marine Wing Support Squadron 374 carried out aviation support missions in Al Anbar Province of Iraq. During that time the Marines and sailors of the battalion developed an experience on the frontlines only deployed service members can understand.

Some of those experi-

ences were a sense of yearning for what they left behind on American soil – grass, music, cable television, Mexican food, pizza, their friends — but mostly their families and home.

Likewise, the families and friends, who remained on the safely kept home front, longed for their loved ones' safe return. Some counted the days gone as others counted the days left.

See MWSS-374 A11

Healing fields visits desert



The Combat Center color guard stands at attention during the 'Star Spangled Banner' during a memorial service on Sept. 8, at Patriot Park in Cathedral City, Calif., in honor of all 9/11 victims and service members who lost their life supporting the War on Terrorism.

CPL. HEIDI E. LOREDO
COMBAT CORRESPONDENT

Hundreds of people gathered on Sept. 8 at Patriot Park in Cathedral City, Calif., for the dedication and unveiling of the National Healing Field Memorial in honor of the 9/11 victims and service members who lost their life supporting the Global War on Terrorism.

Healing Fields, which ran Sept. 8 through 11, is a national movement which began on the first anniversary of 9/11, to commemorate those who were killed in New York, Washington, D.C., and Shanksville, Pa. It has grown to over 45 cities in the country to honor not only the memory of 9/11 victims but to commemorate those who have given their lives in Afghanistan or Iraq.

Three thousand American flags were planted in the field, each tagged with information

about one service member who has fallen in the War on Terrorism.

Five years after the nation was attacked, the country still mourns and continues to heal. "A hole in our heart happened on September 11," said Combat Center chaplain, Capt. David A. Starkey. "And since that moment we've been trying to heal that hole, and this is a part of it."

"The dictionary defines healing as the process of mending, and that's what we're beginning today," said Cathedral City, mayor pro tem, Greg Pettis. "We're mending the wounds of families whose loved ones have paid the ultimate price over the last five years and mending the wounds of our nation between those who disagree about our mission and our course."

See HEALING, A12



ESTES PARK, Colo. – The Marine Corps Air Ground Combat Center Band brass section is led by Gunnery Sgt. Richard Nunley, enlisted conductor, during a fanfare for an evening performance as part of the 30th annual Longs Peak Scottish-Irish Highland Festival Saturday. The Combat Center Band is the only musical group to return six times. They performed more than 10 major performances over four days in front of thousands of spectators as well as marching in a parade.

CPL. BRIAN A. TUTTILL

See BAND, B1

C.O.P. Corner

Community Oriented Policing



The proactive voice of crime prevention

Presented by the Provost Marshal's Office Crime Prevention Section

What is your child doing?

Did you know that in this past month an estimated 6.2 million Californians aged 12 years old and over are binge drinkers, which is drinking five or more drinks in one sitting, and an estimated 2.6 million Californians, 12 years of age and over, are currently using illicit drugs.

Does your child know what drugs and alcohol can do to them and ways to stay away from them?

In today's world more and more drugs are getting introduced into school and drinking starts at younger ages. Here are some tips to help you and your child discuss drugs and alcohol.

Kindergarten to 3rd Grade is when to begin to explain what alcohol, tobacco, and drugs are. Also how some people use them even though they are harmful, and the consequences of using them.

- Discuss how anything that is not food or prescribed by the doctor can be extremely harmful.
- Tell them that drugs interfere with the way our bodies work, can make a person very sick, or even cause them to die.
- Explain the idea of addiction-that drug use can become a very bad habit that is hard to stop.

Grades Four through Six (ages 9-11 years old) your child should know:

- the immediate effects of alcohol, tobacco, and other drugs on different parts of the body, including risks of coma or fatal overdose;
- the long-term results of addiction and the loss of control over their lives that users experience;
- the reasons why drugs are especially dangerous for growing bodies;
- the problems that alcohol and other illegal drugs cause not only to the user, but also to the user's family and world.

Grades Seven through Nine (12-14 years old) is the adolescence stage and can often be a confusing and stressful time. As teens struggle to figure out whom they are and how to fit in, while establishing their own identities. Parents may not realize that their young teens feel surrounded by drug use. Nearly 9 out of 10 teens agree "it seems like marijuana is everywhere these days." Teens are twice as likely to be using marijuana as parents believe they are, and teens are getting high in the places that parents think are safe havens, such as around school, at home, and at friends' houses. Parents profoundly shape the choices their children make about drugs.

Teens need to know the immediate, distasteful consequences of tobacco and marijuana use — for example, that smoking causes bad breath and stained teeth and makes clothes and hair smell. As a parent you should discuss drugs' long-term effects:

- the lack of crucial social and emotional skills ordinarily learned during adolescence;
- the risk of lung cancer and emphysema from smoking.

Grades Ten through Twelve (ages 15-17 years old) is when your child needs to understand how to resist peer pressure. Teens need more than a general message not to use drugs. They need to hear from a parent that anyone can become a chronic user or an addict and that even non-addicted use can have serious permanent consequences.

Most high school students are future-oriented so they are more likely to listen to discussions.

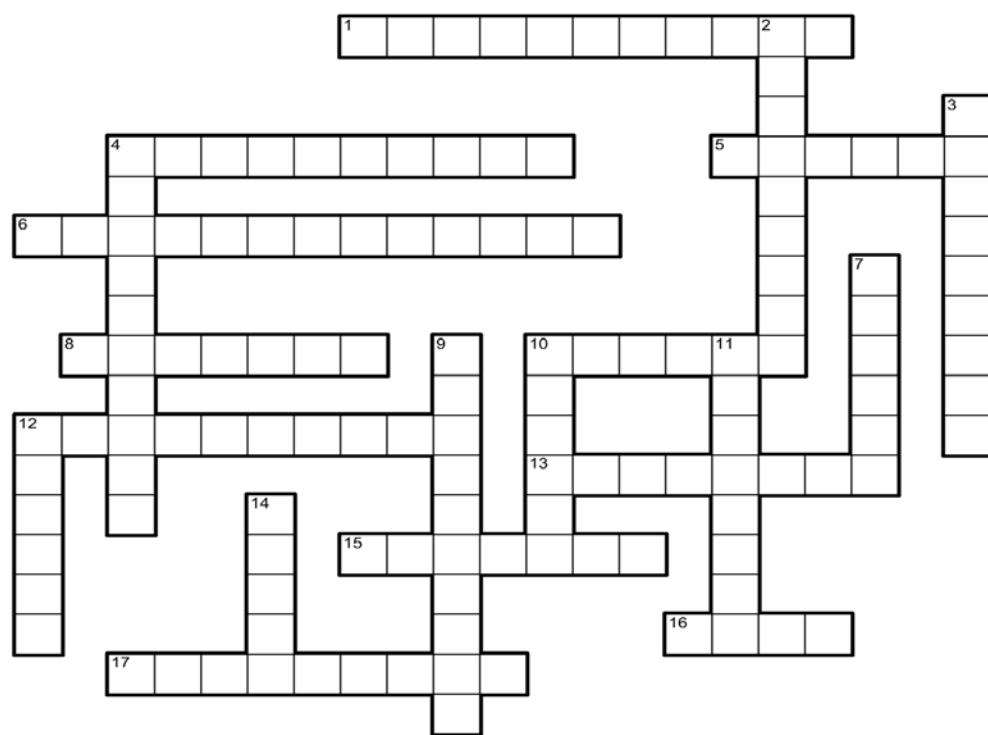
- Discuss how drugs can ruin chances of getting into a good college or being hired for a job.
- Talk about how fatal or crippling car accidents and liver damage are some of the causes from heavy drinking.
- Let them know that addiction, brain damage, memory loss, coma, and death are the consequences from heavy drug and alcohol use.

For more information on how to discuss related topics with your child, go to <http://www.yic.gov/drugfree/childknow.html> or www.safestate.org.

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

WORDS BEGINING WITH "U"



ACROSS

- Without thought, feeling or physical awareness.
- Carried out in secret.
- Disclose or reveal.
- A freshman or sophomore at a high school or college.
- Not common or ordinary.
- The seventh planet from the sun.
- Not changed, modified or affected.
- A portable device to shelter from rain or sunlight.
- Tense; nervous; outraged; angry; strict.
- Displeasing to the eye or very unattractive.
- Naked

DOWN

- Sharing the same opinions or views.
- A proposal or statement of terms and may imply a threat or penalty if not taken.
- In a place beneath.
- An ideally perfect place.
- One who arranges a the burial or cremation of the dead; mortician.
- Not honored or celebrated.
- One expected to lose the game.
- One appointed to rule in baseball.
- An inflammatory lesion, internal or on the body, or a continuing source of corruption.

[Solutions on A10]

Marines, Sailors and Civil Drivers: MCGCS will reimburse AM licensed cab companies for transportation to the Main Base, Marine Corps Air Ground Combat Center. Drivers please verbally record information from your fare's military ID card. Thank you for participating.

ARRIVE
A Combat Center Car Company 367-7433
Top's Taxi 361-6748

ARRIVE

| Name | ID # | Vehicle | Rate | Time | Rate | Time | Rate | Time |
|------------------|------|---------|------|------|------|------|------|------|
| Pick up at | | | | | | | | |
| Destination | | | | | | | | |
| Total fee | | | | | | | | |
| Driver | | | | | | | | |
| Driver's License | | | | | | | | |
| Signature | | | | | | | | |

Centerspeak

Who is your favorite football team this year?

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



PFC. BRADLEY JEFFERS
H&S Co., 3/11



CPL. RYAN STANWOOD
C. Co., 3RD LAR



CPL. MARIO TOBIAS
C. Co., 3RD LAR



LANCE CPL. PEDRO ZUNIGA
HQ Co., 3/14

"The Colts, because Peyton Manning is the man."

"Packers, because they are my home team."

"The Cowboys, because everything from Texas is better."

"Broncos, because I think they will have a good year with their new quarterback."

What's on your mind?

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

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

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

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Lance Cpl. Katelyn A. Knauer
Lance Cpl. Regina N. Ortiz

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LANCE CPL. MICHAEL S. CIFUENTES
Sgt. Brian L. Landrum, a scout observer attached with advance party, 1st Battalion, 7th Marine Regiment, greets his 13-month-old son, Gavin, and his wife, Brandi, Sept. 6 on Victory Field after coming home from a 7-month deployment to Iraq.



LANCE CPL. MICHAEL S. CIFUENTES
Gunnery Sgt. Michael A. Miller, Charlie Company gunnery sergeant with advance party, 1st Battalion, 7th Marine Regiment, is welcomed home with two strong hugs from his sons Gabriel (left) and Austin on Victory Field Sept. 6 after spending a 7-month deployment in Iraq.

Big day for 1/7's advance party as they return from Iraq

LANCE CPL. MICHAEL S. CIFUENTES

COMBAT CORRESPONDENT

The notorious Mojave Desert sun shined bright on Victory Field, but showed compassion in keeping the heat to a minimum.

Sept. 6 was the perfect day for more than 100 people aboard the Combat Center. Two hours past noon and a section of Victory Field was full of life. The energy level of family members and friends was above normal for a Wednesday as they awaited the arrival of their loved ones after a 7-month Iraq deployment.

At 2 p.m., the energy increased as 50 advance party members from 1st Battalion, 7th Marine Regiment, strutted onto Victory Field to reunite with those awaiting them.

Excitement overwhelmed the Clark family who were waiting on Sgt. Michael D. Clark, a motor transportation operator with Headquarters and Service Company, 1/7. Clark arrived on his son, Scott's, third birthday.

"I cannot put these feelings I have into words," said Nikki, Clark's wife, as she waited for the 2-bus convoy to arrive at the Combat Center. "I'm ecstatic that he's coming on Scott's birthday. It's wonderful."

Nikki made a DVD of her husband that Scott watched almost every night, she said. That afternoon, Scott was able to see the man behind the screen, a birthday present that

will not be matched throughout his life, said Nikki.

"He never forgot Daddy's face," she added.

As Clark walked away from the white, unmarked buses, he entered the west gate of Victory Field where he scanned all families and friends who waited and cheered. By surprise, he was showered by hugs and kisses from his family who ran up from beside him as he searched the field. Saying "happy birthday" wasn't necessary for Scott, — the moment implied the phrase.

"It makes coming home that much better," said Clark, a Reno, Nev., native. "I've been looking forward to this day as much as my family has."

Clark's plans are to relax, unpack and catch up with his family. For the past seven months, his battalion operated in Iraq's Al Anbar province with their firm base in Al Qaim. Their mission was to get the Iraqi Army up to par with being a self operated force in the country, he said. By the time 1/7's advance party

departed, the Iraqi Army were patrolling by themselves and accomplishing vital missions like finding weapons caches.

Despite their success in Iraq, the families and friends who waited at home weren't thinking about the missions in Iraq, but their loved ones' safe return home.

Cpl. Jason J. Christlieb, a rifleman with "Suicide Charley," and Cati his wife, were married two months before the deployment. It was tough being away from her new husband, she said.

"I'm very sad that I had to let him go to a dangerous place right after we married each other," said Cati moments before the advance party arrived. "But since he left, I've been keeping very busy. I moved into our first place that we'll live together in and I got a dog for us."

"I couldn't wait any longer," she added. "I'm getting my newlywed back. We're going to be a family now. I am so excited now, I'm beside myself."



LANCE CPL. MICHAEL S. CIFUENTES
Marines with advance party, 1st Battalion, 7th Marine Regiment, walk on to Victory Field and are greeted by their families and friends Sept. 6.

Bush Marks 9/11 Anniversary by Urging Unity in Terror War

DONNA MILES
AMERICAN FORCES PRESS SERVICE

WASHINGTON, — Monday President Bush marked the fifth anniversary of the Sept. 11, 2001, terror attacks on the United States by calling on the nation to remember those lost that day and to unite in moving forward to win the war on terror.

Bush, speaking in the Oval Office after earlier visiting all three sites scarred by the Sept. 11 attacks, recounted the painful events of that day but also the extraordinary courage he said ordinary citizens displayed.

"On this day, we remember the innocent who lost their lives," he said following solemn ceremonies at New York's World Trade Center, in Shanksville, Pa., and at the Pentagon. "And we pay tribute to those who gave their lives so that others might live."

The United States resolves to honor all those lost and seeks a lasting memorial to them in a "safer, more hopeful world," he said.

The United States has learned much about the enemy that attacked on Sept. 11 and recognizes it as a global network of extremists driven by a totalitarian ideology that hates all that America stands for, Bush said.

And while actions taken in the United States since that day have prevented another similar attack on the homeland, Bush insisted that the terrorists "have not been idle" and haven't given up their goals.

"We face an enemy determined to bring death and suffering into our homes," he said. "America did not ask for this war, and every American wishes it was over. So do I. But the war is not over, and it will not be over until either we or the extremists emerge victorious."

The United States has made headway in confronting terrorists and those who harbor or support them, Bush said. "We helped drive the Taliban from power in Afghanistan. We put al Qaeda on the run and killed or captured most of those who planned the Sept. 11 attacks, including the man believed to be the mastermind, Khalid Sheik Mohammed."

While Osama bin Laden and other terrorists remain in hiding, Bush said, the United States' message to them is clear: "No matter how long it takes, America will find you, and we will bring you to justice."

The president said the United States must maintain its resolve to follow through with what he acknowledged is not an easy fight. "If we do not defeat these enemies now, we will leave our children to face a Middle East overrun by terrorist states and radical dictators armed with nuclear weapons," he said.

The stakes could not be higher, Bush said, calling the struggle way more than a clash of civilizations as some have suggested, but rather, "a struggle for civilization."

"We are fighting to maintain the way of life enjoyed by free nations," he said. "And we are fighting for the possibility that good and decent people across the Middle East can raise up societies based on freedom and tolerance and personal dignity."

By working to support democratic leaders and reformers in parts of the world ruled by tyranny, the United States is helping to offer a path away from radicalism and extremism, the president said. When the people of the Middle East see a future of hope and opportunity for their children, the appeal of radicalism will decline "and we will leave our children with a better and safer world," he said.

Bush called on Americans to observe the fifth anniversary of the Sept. 11 terror attacks by rededicating themselves to this cause.

"Our nation has endured trials, and we face a difficult road ahead," he said. "Winning this war will require the determined efforts of a unified country. So we must put aside our differences and work together to meet the test that history has given us. We will defeat our enemies; we will protect our people; and we will lead the 21st century into a shining age of human liberty."



U.S. ARMY SGT. JOE BATTLE
Members and senior leaders of Multinational Corps Iraq pause for a moment of silence during a memorial ceremony Sept. 11 at Al Faw palace, at Camp Victory, Iraq.

9/11 victims honored

SGT. BRIAN JAMES ANDERSON

SPECIAL TO AMERICAN FORCES PRESS SERVICE

BAGHDAD — Multinational Corps Iraq held a 9/11 Remembrance Ceremony at the Al Faw palace here Monday, reminding everyone in attendance why service members stand on foreign ground.

On Sept. 11, 2001, America was attacked by terrorists, resulting in the death of 2,973 people.

"I will not forget the wound to our country and those who inflicted it; I will not yield; I will not rest; I will not relent in waging this struggle for freedom and security for the American people," President Bush said nine days later.

Currently, U.S. Forces are involved in operations Iraqi and Enduring Freedom, not only ensuring the safety of American soil from terrorist attacks, but also securing the freedom of millions of Iraqi and Afghan citizens.

The ceremony opened with the 76th Army Band playing the Iraqi national anthem followed by the U.S. national anthem.

Chaplain (Col.) Kenneth Brown, command chaplain of Multinational Corps Iraq, gave the invocation, followed by a summary of events read by Sgt. Maj. Ivor Watson, of the command's combined joint staff. Then there was a moment of remembrance for those who lost their lives on the day, which for many, can never be forgotten.

Army Spc. Jose Burgos, a reservist with the 404th Civil Affairs Battalion, from Fort Dix, N.J., who provided care to victims of the World Trade Center attack as an emergency medical technician, said it only gets harder for him as the time goes by.

"I can't believe it was five years ago. It feels like yesterday," he said. "It is hard to imagine ... It is hard being

here, doing the (mass casualty) exercises, knowing I could be involved with something like that again."

Burgos was one of eight soldiers directly involved in aid or support on Sept. 11, 2001, that was in attendance for today's ceremony here.

U.S. Ambassador to Iraq Zalmay Khalilzad said the monument for the victims and the heroes from that day is being constructed now.

"The true monument for the heroes and victims of 9/11 will not be made of stone, but will be living monuments," he said. "The 50 million people liberated from tyranny since that day. A free and prosperous Iraq will stand as the ultimate testimony to the sacrifices you are making to ensure that America remains secure from the threats posed by terrorists."

Army Lt. Gen. Peter Chiarelli, commander of Multinational Corps Iraq, gave everyone a sense of closeness to the victims from the horrific day half a decade ago.

"They were mothers, fathers, daughters, sons and friends," he said. "They were old, middle-aged and children. Men and women, boys and girls. They were Americans, but they were also citizens of a dozen nations."

He went on to say that some of them were innocent bystanders, while others were rescue workers and heroes who sacrificed their lives that day to save others. Chiarelli said the terrorists didn't realize America's determination to seek justice when they attacked U.S. soil.

"These murderers bet that the United States and its friends would stand by and do nothing," he said. "They bet that we would shrink from our duty and our purpose. They bet wrong."

"Over the last five years, the United States and its brave allies have waged an offensive campaign against those who hate free nations and free people," he continued. "Let there be no doubt, we will prevail in this struggle."



STAFF SGT. D. MYLES CULLEN

President George W. Bush meets with family members of those who lost their lives at the Pentagon on 9/11, during a wreath laying ceremony at the crash site of Flight 77 at the Pentagon, Monday.

Higher calling leads grunt to service in Iraq

LANCE CPL. RAY LEWIS

1ST MARINE DIVISION

OBSERVATION POST BEARS, Iraq — Most Marines are called to the Corps by a recruiter, but one Marine here believes he was called by God.

Lance Cpl. Joshua T. Potts said he believed God would take his experiences as an infantryman and use them to prepare him for service as a Navy Chaplain in the future.

"I did it to gain more respect for 'the infantry world,'" said Potts, a mortarman with I Company, 3rd Battalion, 2nd Marine Regiment.

The 31-year-old infantryman from Boca Rotan, Fla., said becoming a "grunt" will help him better understand the struggles Marines go through on the forward edge of the spear.

Then he can take his experiences and apply them to his sermons when he becomes a chaplain.

Potts didn't figure this overnight. He gave God credit for redirecting the course of his life and setting him on the path to serving others.

"I was working banking as a financial advisor," Potts explained. "I had a job with a flexible work schedule and a house, but my religious calling was stronger."

Potts' fiery desire ignited when he saw flames and smoke billow from the twin towers on television during the 9/11 attacks.

He became drawn to seeing heroic images of Marines coming to America's

rescue, risking their lives for freedom.

"I would think about joining the Marines daily until that's all I would think about," Potts said. "Then God helped me make my decision."

So after a year of hard thinking, he left the easy life behind and headed for the recruiter's office.

"I went to the recruiter and told him that I wanted to join the Marines," Potts said. "I want to serve with Marines in combat."

The two talked about the infantry option. While speaking they established common ground.

"I found out we were the same age and we were both borne-again Christians," Potts said.

Soon they became good friends.

"He thought it was great that I wanted to go enlisted," Potts said. "He didn't even try to convince me to join the Marines."

That's because he already had his mind made.

"A few weeks later I found myself at Parris Island," Potts said. "That's when I was thinking, 'What have I done?'"

He said he has no regrets though.

Potts is proud to sweat in the Iraqi heat alongside his fellow Marines.

He is now working towards his bachelor's degree and has plans for a master's degree.

A lot of people think he's crazy for giving up his comfortable life, but Potts said he's just answering the call to serve others.

"That's what God called me to do," he said.



Lance Cpl. Joshua T. Potts, a 31-year-old mortarman, said he was called to the Marine infantry by God. He said he became an infantryman so he can understand their struggles when he later becomes a Navy chaplain. Potts is currently serving a seven-month deployment in Habbaniyah, Iraq, with I Company, 3rd Battalion, 2nd Marine Regiment under Regimental Combat Team 5.

Chaplains solve problems from office chair to combat zone

SGT. ROBERT L. FISHER III

COMBAT CORRESPONDENT

A pastor stands in front of his congregation and gives them words of wisdom and inspiration. He's dressed in camouflage and dirt from the field like the rest of his flock. Armed with nothing more than a Bible, he's walked the desert with his Marines and sailors.

He chose the life of ministry and military and they call him chaplain.

Today's chaplains like yesterday's can be found in the field with their fellow service members or wherever else they may be called to serve. They serve in several different capacities, but the most fulfilling will always be found standing next to Marines and sailors as they prepare to step into combat.

"There is no greater place than to be here with the men and women who are making it happen, who are providing freedom for our country and other countries," said Lt. Robert B. Wills, 1st Tank Battalion chaplain. "There is no other better place to minister."

Wills deployed with 2nd Battalion, 7th Marine Regiment, from July 2005 to January 2006 and described

it as the most rewarding ministry he ever had.

"Being on the front lines, facing life and death with the men and hearing them talk about it and sharing with them about Christ and what God can do for us," he said. "When you face life and death with the men and you get to minister to them, the color of the carpet at church really is unimportant."

When Lt. Matthew S. Weems, 3rd Battalion, 11th Marine Regiment, chaplain, deployed with 3rd Battalion, 4th Marine Regiment, from January to July 2005, he spent his time riding in convoys and going on patrols alongside the infantry. Being on the front lines with infantry Marines can be difficult, but it was one of the most rewarding experiences, he said.

"I want to be with them wherever they are at," said Weems. "I know I am a non-combatant, but I wanted to be out when the young guys are doing the unexpected."

Many chaplains who join the military ranks do so for the ability to help their fellow service members maintain their spiritual strength and welfare. They value the courageous will of Marines and sailors on the front lines to defend the freedom of others and strive to aid them in their morale.

"A chaplain is defined more for who they are than for what they do," said Cmdr. Thomas P. Hall, Catholic chaplain. "There is a great symbolic value attached to the Chaplain Corps that is often overlooked. Just as the U.S. flag represents the highest aspirations of our nation, the mere presence of the chaplain reminds us of our freedom of thought, our freedom of conscience as individuals and as a people. When a Marine gives their life on the battlefield it is for the highest principles represented by the U.S. flag as well as those represented by the Chaplain Corps."

Unfortunately, a stigma

keeps some Marines and sailors from seeking the help of a chaplain when they most desperately need it.

"People have sometimes been afraid to see a chaplain because they would feel repercussions in their career," said Lt. Cmdr. Emile G. Moured, deputy director of Religious Ministries Directorate. "There is a stigma, if you're going to see the chaplain you must be mentally unstable, and if you're mentally unstable, you're unfit for command."

Though some will disagree, even Marines are human. Everyone faces difficulties, whether civilian or military, and they all have the same inefficiencies and the

same frustrations.

"The Marines are a notch above everybody else in that they are committed to certain values and principles, and they've gone through training that no one else has gone through," said Moured. "But the reality is, we are human beings. Sometimes it's joyful, sometimes it's frustrating."

Even counselors need counseling sometimes. Life isn't selective; it affects everybody all the time.

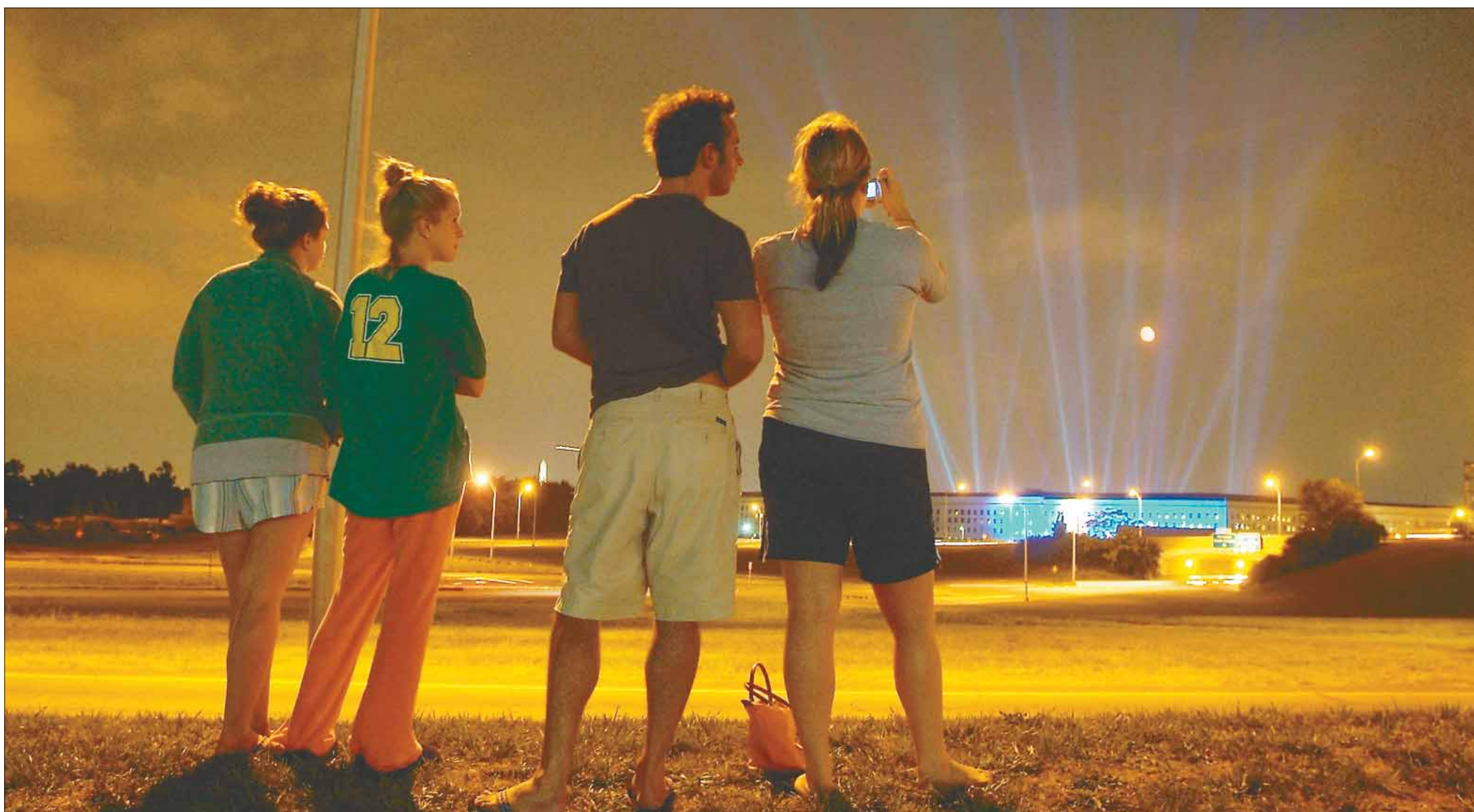
"Even chaplains are affected by small problems, we're human too," said Lt. Karen J. Rector, Headquarters Battalion chaplain. "Life comes at everybody like a freight train."

But this stigma couldn't be

further from the truth. Chaplains want to assist in whatever capacity they are able in order to help the service member find answers to their problems.

"I have always made it clear that whatever is shared with me as a chaplain never leaves the confines of my office," said Hall. "I think that this is clear in the mind of any Marine or sailor who has ever come to me."

From the chaplains on the front lines to the office, they care about Marines' and sailors' problems. Whether too hot to handle or too cold to hold, they want to help every service member to be in control.



CHIEF PETTY OFFICER JOHNNY BIVERA

Arlington, Va., resident Allison Bacon (right), who works for Navy Facilities Engineering Command at the Washington Navy Yard, takes a picture of the 184 beams of light illuminating from the Pentagon courtyard as Hillary Hout (from left), Melissa Twardzik and Chris Tassa look on. "It's spectacular," Allison said. "I feel honored we live here, to be able to come out and see it." The lights commemorate each life lost during the Sept. 11, 2001, attack on the Pentagon and will stay lit throughout the next day.

Beams of Light Honor Those Who Died at Pentagon

GERRY J. GILMORE
AMERICAN FORCES PRESS SERVICE

WASHINGTON, — People kept a respectful silence as 184 beams of white light emanated from the Pentagon's center courtyard the

evening of Sept. 10 rising into the night sky like lonely wraiths searching for lost loved ones.

Deputy Defense Secretary Gordon England signaled for the lights to be turned on just before 9 p.m., as thousands of

people who'd just completed the America Supports You Freedom Walk and family members of victims of the Sept. 11, 2001, terrorist attacks looked on.

Famed soprano vocalist Denyce Graves sang "God Bless America" as onlookers craned their necks upward. Some people stared stoically

into the black sky, while others made little sounds and wiped at their eyes.

Tiffany R. Bush, 14, from Lorton, Va., was one of the people who had to look down and away from the lights and contend with her tears.

Bush lost her grandmother, Judith Jones, on Sept. 11, 2001, when American Airlines

Flight 77 struck the Pentagon, killing 125 people in the building and 59 passengers aboard the plane. Jones was a Navy civilian employee.

Only moments before, Bush had been gazing at the beams, one for each person who died at the Pentagon. Then, her wet brown eyes leaked a shiny ribbon down her cheek.

"It's nice," Bush said of the light show. "It's inspiring to know there are people out there who still care."

Bush's mother, Michelle C. Burkes, 36, also of Lorton, accompanied her daughter to the Pentagon ceremony.

"It's a very nice tribute,"

Burkes said, watching the shifting lights above her as people about her began to head home.

"I got a bit of goose bumps when the lights came on," she said.

Each year the Defense Department has hosted an event at the Pentagon to commemorate the lives lost there on Sept. 11, 2001, Allison Barber, deputy assistant secretary of defense for public affairs, told American Forces Press Service in an earlier interview.

"And, so, this year on the fifth-year anniversary, we thought it would be meaningful to really do something to honor those 184 lives," Barber said.

Former sailor joins MCAGCC Band ranks

CPL. BRIAN A. TUTHILL

COMBAT CORRESPONDENT

One Combat Center Band member has taken his military career in a whole new direction by reigniting a childhood passion after spending six years in the Navy aboard submarines as a nuclear machinist mate.

Cpl. Corey Rodgers, who came to the band in April, decided to pick up his euphonium, which is very similar to a baritone, near the end of his Navy contract and join the Marine Corps band.

"Towards the end of my time with the Navy, my musical roots started coming through again," said Rodgers, who began playing in the 6th grade after being inspired by his older cousin. "I wanted to be in the Navy band, but because of my nuclear training, I was told I would never be able to join the Navy band."

Rodgers joined the Navy and decided to work in the nuclear field as a machinist mate when he was in recruit training in Great Lakes, Ill.

"I was going to college and my computer science major wasn't holding up," said Rodgers, a 28-year-old Wynne, Ak., native. "I ended up calling the Navy hotline and just wanting a free video tape. Eventually recruiters started talking to me, and I let myself be recruited."

His path to the Marine Corps began as his Navy contract was ending, he said.

"I let my contract expire and I was walking through a mall with my wife in Georgia near where I was stationed at the time," said Rodgers. "That's when I saw the Marine

recruiting office in the mall."

Rodgers stepped onto the yellow footprints of Parris Island, S.C., June 14, 2005, after passing auditions for the Marine Corps band and signing his new enlistment contract.

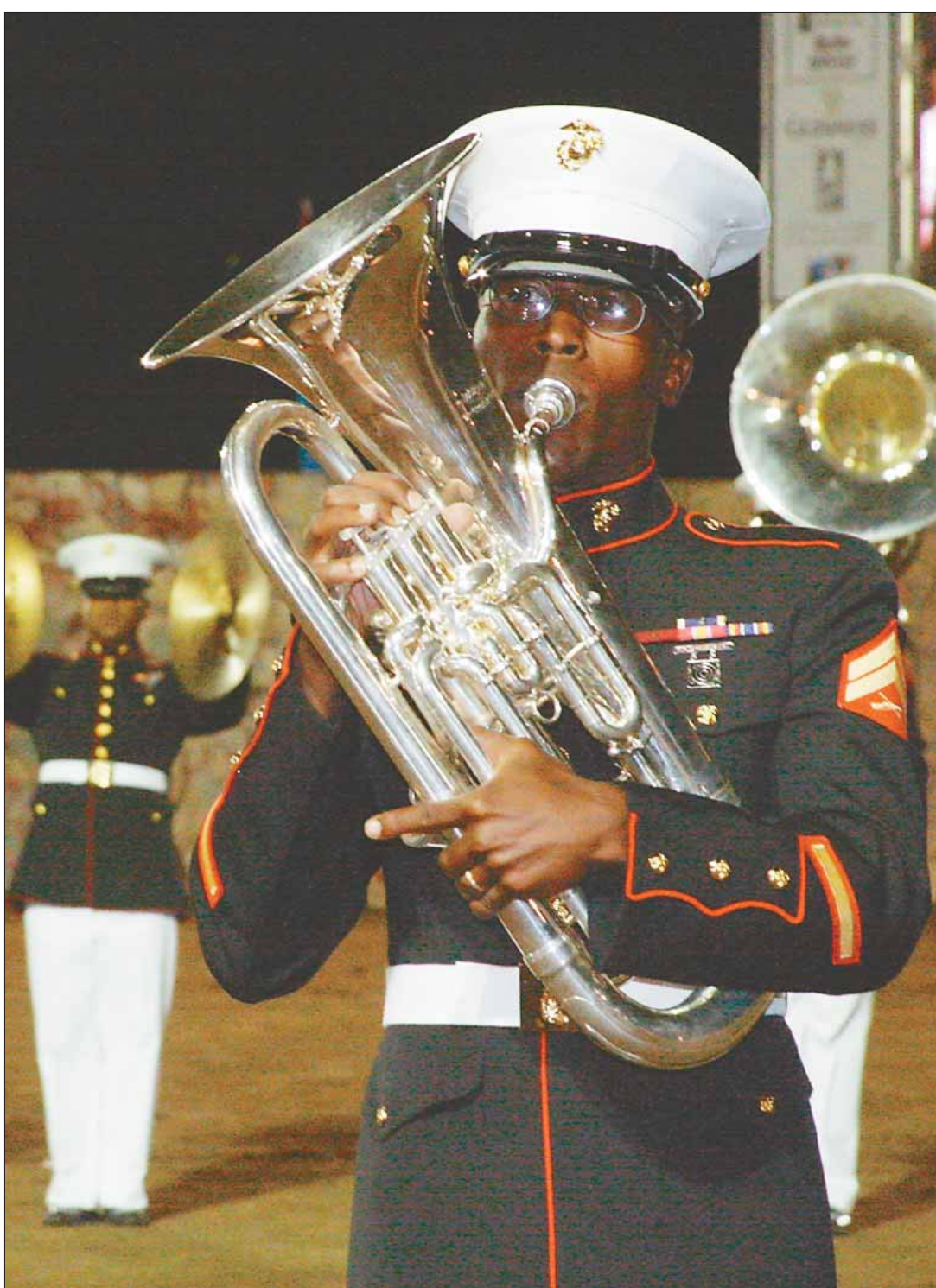
"Having already experienced a boot camp made Marine Corps boot camp easier," he said. "If you think too much, you get in trouble. I learned right away to turn off my brain and follow directions. For those who only go through Marine Corps boot camp it is the toughest ever."

After attending the Armed Forces School of Music in Norfolk, Va., Rodgers was cut orders here. When he arrived April 28 to the Combat Center, the band was at fever pitch in the peak of their performance season with a multitude of trips around the western United States, as well as local performances and filling in for other Marine bands in the Southwest.

"Corporal Rodgers has really stepped right up and has had a seamless transition into the unit," said Gunnery Sgt. Carl Vanderzee, euphonium section leader for the Combat Center Band. "Being prior service, he's a solid Marine and brings a wealth of experience and maturity that you don't always find with our younger Marines."

"He's doing great on the instrument and is right where he needs to be as a corporal," he said. "He is always striving to better himself and reach the next level."

Although Rodgers recently passed his year mark in the Corps and only five months after arriving here, he said he plans to make a career out of being a Marine Corps musician.



CPL. BRIAN A. TUTHILL

Cpl. Corey Rodgers, a 28-year-old euphonium player with the Marine Corps Air Ground Combat Center Band, plays during a recent performance in Estes Park, Colo. Rodgers joined the Marine Corps band field when he started playing again after spending six years in the Navy as a nuclear machinist mate aboard submarines.

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| <p>Marines, Sailors, and cab drivers: MCCS will reimburse ANY licensed cab company for transportation to the Main Gate, Marine Corps Air Ground Combat Center. Drivers: please legibly record information from your fare's military I.D. card. Thank you for participating.</p> | <p>MCCS MARINE CORPS COMBAT CENTER</p> <p>ARRIVE ALIVE</p> <p>A Combat Center Car Company 367-7433</p> <p>Top's Taxi 361-6748</p> <p><i>Blended</i> WE ALL MAKE A DIFFERENCE THANKS FOR DRINKING RESPONSIBLY</p> | <p><small>By endorsement of the general is authorized by the National Department of the USA 10200</small></p> <p>MCCS ARRIVE ALIVE</p> <p>Name _____ ID # _____ Pick up at _____ Destination _____ Total fee _____ Driver _____ Date/Time _____ Outsource _____ Signature _____</p> <p><small>Blended</small> WE ALL MAKE A DIFFERENCE</p> |
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Gharmah police, Marines offer local community helping hand

GUNNERY SGT. MARK OLIVA
1ST MARINE DIVISION

GHARMAH, Iraq — Iraqi Police here are giving local citizens here more than a safe community. They're clothing the neediest of the small city's children.

Gharmah's Iraqi Police, along with Marine Police Transition Team members, pitched in to pass out clothes, school items and sports equipment to children in the city. It was an effort started by Marines working with police here and carried out by police and the city's mayor.

"I feel very happy to give to the children," said Iraqi Lt. Col. Dalaf Rasheed, the police chief here. "These are my children. I like these children."

Dalaf explained the clothing drive will continue to bond the Iraqi police to the citizens they protect. It's a growing relationship that six months ago didn't exist. Now, through actions such as this, Iraqi citizens in Gharmah see the police as their protectors and providers.

"The people here love the police," Dalaf explained. "More police are bringing safety to this area. This gives trust between the police and the people."

Dalaf said there is an immediate need for the donated clothes, school supplies and sports equipment. He worked with the city's mayor to identify families that were among the neediest and expected the clothing to go to nearly 300 children.

"Sure there's a need," Dalaf explained. "The children who will get these clothes will be very happy. We want to do more of this in the future."

The children's clothing was donated by Marines' families in the United States, according to Staff. Sgt. Mark A Tyson, the PTT chief for



GUNNERY SGT. MARK OLIVA

Iraqi Police at the Gharmah Police Station rush to load dozens of boxes of donated clothes, schools supplies and sports equipment Sept. 5, in Gharmah, Iraq.

Gharmah. He explained the needs of the community became obvious when he patrolled the city.

"We saw the same kids wearing the same clothes each time we went out there," said Tyson, a 37-year-old from Orting, Wash. "These were the same kids we gave candy and would toss around a ball. These are the kids we're trying to reach."

Tyson said the idea wasn't an original one. He saw an article written about a Marine who did this sort of thing in Fallujah in the past. He talked with his Marines and they called home to their wives and families.

He also sat down with Gharmah's mayor and Dalaf to gain their support. They wanted the donations to come from the Iraqi Police.

"They asked why we would want to do something like this," Tyson explained. "I told them it was just as important for us as it was for them to take care of the local people. I told them as Christians,

charitable giving was important just as it is for Muslims. They were grateful and shocked that we'd spend our family's money to help out this community."

The entire project took on a momentum of its' own. Families of the deployed Marines started their own drives, cleaning out closets of outgrown children's clothes, buying up school supplies and sports gear and even hitting close-out sales. They mailed them to Iraq where Tyson and his Marines were busy consolidating and cataloging all the items.

"A lot of credit has to go to Cpl. Jason Howell and Cpl. Michael Dalhstom," Tyson said. "They were the ones inventorying everything and getting it ready to pass out."

It was no small feat. Dozens of boxes filled with children's shoes and clothing outfits filled nearly half of Gharmah Police Station's jail. The police had nowhere else large enough to store all the items before they passed them out.

This sort of community outreach wasn't conceivable here less than half a year ago, Tyson explained. Then, police didn't patrol the city. Local Iraqis didn't trust the police.

"There was no local activity here, then," Baker added. "There were no cars on the streets and people would run from house-to-house. People didn't go to the market."

But that's changed. Gharmah is now a small, bustling Iraqi city. The marketplaces are full. Cars clog the city's narrow streets and the police are walking the beat every day.

"they're doing joint operations with the Iraqi Army," Tyson added. "More civilians are coming into the police station to offer information. A lot of time and patience has been spent to get us here to be able to do something like this."

The growing level of trust between the local Iraqi citizens and police is what Tyson and Dalaf both hope to foster with the clothing drive.

"The police are providing security for the people here," Tyson said. "Now they're providing for their other needs. This is another way to reach out the community."

"Every day, my police help the people here," Dalaf said. "Our patrols take people to the hospital. The police help the people and the people help the police. The people can see us giving to them and understand that we're here to help."

To tow or not to tow; Don't let your car be in question

SGT. ROBERT L. FISHER III

COMBAT CORRESPONDENT

An abandoned car covered in dust sits in the lower level of the garage complex. People passing by the car have written such absurdities as "Clean Me," and "I like boot Marines."

Abandoned cars are a constant around a military base due to deployments, medical emergencies and sudden issuances of orders. The Provost Marshal's Office will sometimes have to remove these vehicles to prevent them from becoming an eventual eyesore or major annoyance.

Three towing companies in the area tow and store the vehicles, and holding fees can run as high as \$250 per day. The towing companies store the vehicles for 30 to 45 days and then ask for the title because the large amount due for holding fees.

PMO checks the base or state registration of every car reportedly sitting idle for long periods to see if it is expired. After attempting to issue a citation to the owner and failing to get in contact them, the car may be considered abandoned.

Many calls about abandoned vehicles come from 801 housing. Some service members drive their car into the housing area and leave it, said Cpl. Richard Mendoza, military policeman. When Marines deploy or receive orders to leave and do not store their vehicle properly it can be misinterpreted as abandoned and possibly towed.

"I try multiple attempts to contact the owner and sometimes we have to take other measures," said Mendoza. "We give the owner a specific amount of time to respond, and then we tow it off the installation."

Others leave their cars in parking lots on base after they break down, intending to return and fix them, he said.

If they let the registration expire and then try to drive it around base and get pulled over, the car will be towed, he said.

But PMO will contact the owner's unit involved in case they want to help the person out, said Mendoza. They could explain why the owner left the car behind or remind the owner to keep their base and state registration updated.

The situation changes when a driver is caught driving under the influence of drugs or alcohol or driving on state and base suspensions. The vehicles are towed immediately unless the service member is married and only has one vehicle. The vehicles are then held by the towing companies for seven to 14 days for DUIs or a minimum of 24 hours for suspensions.

The Vehicle Registration Division in building 901 maintains the deployment parking lot located behind Carl's Jr. Marines and sailors getting ready to leave should contact them to store their vehicle properly or it might be towed.

"The most proper way is to store the vehicle in the deployment parking lot or at a friend's house. Not 801 housing, but someone you can trust," said Mendoza.

To properly store a vehicle call the Vehicle Registration Division at 830-6794.



SGT. ROBERT L. FISHER III

A citation adorns the window of an abandoned vehicle in the lower level of a Combat Center parking complex.

Headquarters Battalion takes new turn on motorcycle safety

SGT. ROBERT L. FISHER III

COMBAT CORRESPONDENT

Motor vehicle accidents decreased 17 percent from fiscal year 2004 to 2005, but motorcycle accidents increased 83 percent.

The Marine Corps responded by increasing the strictness and number of safety regulations and training programs to raise awareness for motorcycle riders.

"Units are encouraged to form riding clubs to promote safe and responsible motorcycle operations and learn from more experienced riders," according to the Warrior Preservation Campaign 2006.

With that push, every command at II Marine Expeditionary Force responded by starting their own motorcycle safety programs, according to the Naval Safety Center.

That was the "fuel for the fire" for Sgt. Jody M. Bridges, Exercise Support Division. Armed with that, he started the Motorcycle Safety Awareness Program for Headquarters Battalion here. They held their first class and meeting Aug. 31.

The goal of the program here is to enhance awareness of safety rules and regulations on and off the Combat Center and provide a network for new riders to get and give advice, said Bridges.

He and fellow experienced riders in the program plan to give classes and hold meetings to discuss riding tips with newer riders and share riding experi-

ences. They also plan to set up rides to have fun, increase camaraderie and give new riders a chance to practice in a safe environment.

Sgt. Maj. Nicholas J. Bourikas, Headquarters Battalion sergeant major, expressed his concern about the safety of every Headquarters Battalion motorcycle rider as well as his interest and approval of the program, during the program's first meeting. He too plans on attending the meetings and rides so he can help improve other riders' techniques by sharing lessons he's already learned the hard way.

Many new riders learn from other inexperienced or otherwise unsafe riders. This leads to showboating and preventable accidents unless the rider had someone experienced to teach them properly, said Sgt. James Flint, inspector at PMO.

"A lot of guys jump on bikes and don't know anything," he said. "You can learn in a class, but you learn better from talking to experienced riders. This program will prevent crashes and make younger riders better riders and more aware of their surroundings."

The Headquarters Battalion Motorcycle Safety Awareness Program offers guidance to new and experienced riders as well as opportunities for rides to have fun and practice.

Those interested in joining the program can contact Bridges at 830-3000.



SGT. ROBERT L. FISHER III

Sgt. Jody M. Bridges, Exercise Support Division, teaches the first class of the Headquarters Battalion Motorcycle Safety Awareness Program Aug. 31.

Proper Gear List before riding

- Helmet
- Full face shield on the helmet or shatter-proof glasses, goggles or sunglasses
- Full-fingered gloves
- Full-length jeans or pants
- Hard-soled footwear with a heel, preferably above the ankle
- Brightly-colored long sleeve shirt and reflective vest, which must be colored international orange, yellow, or lime green.

Unexploded Ordnance no joke, not souvenir

DAVID W. HORN

EXPLOSIVES SAFETY OFFICER

Unexploded Ordnance is no joke!

There is always a possibility of ordnance detonating in the hands of people who don't know what it is they are looking at.

There is an inherent danger that is final or simply fatal. Everyone who works or lives on and around the installation must be aware of the possibility of some type of military ordnance showing itself.

This base has been here a long time and has had many employees, both military and civilian, who have come across unexploded ordnance and, because of their unfamiliarity with ammunition and explosives, almost always believe it to be inert.

They think they have a really cool souvenir, and more often than not they hold the potential for disaster in their hands and have absolutely no idea of the devastation they have in their possession.

As reported on Fox News, Aug. 31, an explosives incident occurred in Bakersfield, Calif., when a group of children were playing with a military shell given to them by a neighbor before the device exploded, killing a young boy and girl, police

and witnesses said Aug. 30.

Bakersfield police said there have been no arrests or charges in the case and are still trying to determine what caused the shell to detonate Aug. 29, damaging homes and forcing neighbors to wrap bloodied and dazed children in blankets.

"As you can imagine, this was a traumatic experience for the kids and their parents. So it's going to take a while to sort things out," said Bakersfield Police Detective Greg Terry.

Andrew Etcheverry, 8, died at the scene of the explosion in the city's Oleander neighborhood. Jeni Marie Klawitter, 7, died at the Kern Medical Center, the county coroner said. Five other children, the oldest 12 years old, had injuries ranging from minor to moderate. Police initially reported that six children were injured but later determined that an 8-year-old girl thought to be hurt was not at the scene when the shell exploded.

Frank Sendejo, who lives near the complex where the explosion occurred, confirmed Aug. 30 he had given a group of children a 40 mm shell. Bakersfield police said they've talked to Sendejo, and he told The Bakersfield Californian he thought the shell was spent and often used it as a "conversation piece."

He said the firing pin and bottom shell casing had been

removed, along with the gun powder inside. I thought it was harmless," he told the newspaper. Tyvia Holloway, 10, remained in the Kern Medical Center's trauma unit on Aug. 30. Her mother, Sherlicia Owens, said Tyvia had a hole in her back and shrapnel from the device in her side, cheek and arms.

Doctors are trying to determine if the girl will need plastic surgery. Monique Salmon, 20, spent that afternoon cleaning up dust and debris in her living room and kitchen left by the explosion. She said the blast left quarter-sized holes in her walls.

Bakersfield police said their bomb squad has contacted federal and military agencies for assistance.

There is no way to know for sure exactly where any ordnance item has come from.

Just because it's military ordnance, doesn't mean it came from the Combat Center. Such a diverse variety of people and military personnel from all over the world come to the Combat Center so it's impossible to know for sure where it originally came from.

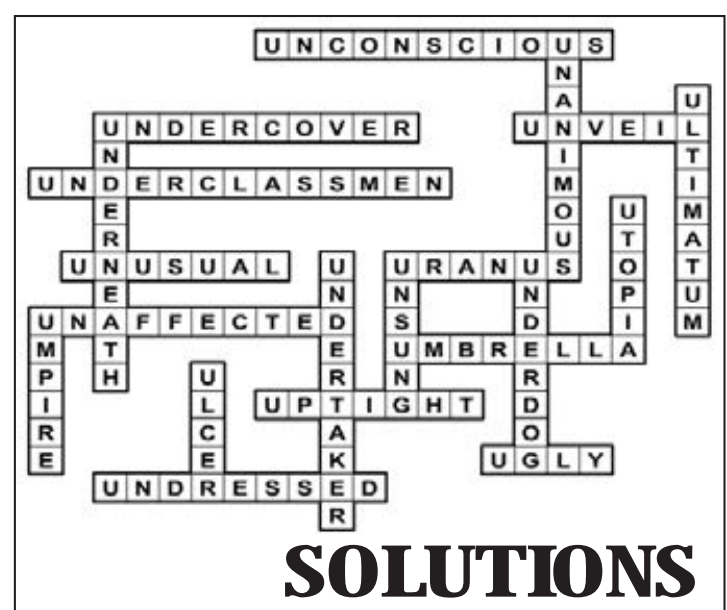
People have said they saw what they thought to be explosive items at swap meets. Years ago I was driving down one of our local streets and noticed a 250 pound practice bomb, situated in the front of a house as a lawn ornament. The item was inert – for "practice use only," loaded with concrete filler – but it still had a live booster installed in its base. So the item was not inert but potentially dangerous.

And only God knows what can be bought through the internet these days.

The safest thing anyone can do is contact civil authorities immediately upon discovery of what could be an explosive item. They in turn have an agreement with our Explosives Ordnance Disposal unit here, and it should be left up to them to decide the most appropriate course of action.

We as parents and adults must always be aware of this possibility due to the environment we have chosen to live in. The simple rule I have always used is, 'Never assume anything when it comes to ammunition and explosives,' or even simpler yet, 'Better safe than sorry.'

For questions or additional information call Dave Horn, explosives safety officer, at 830-8464.



MWSS-374, from A1

Most of these families and friends reached the culminating point of the deployment Sept. 6. They gathered at Combat Center's Victory Field early that morning with "Welcome Home" signs and balloons. A feeling of anxiety, nervousness and excitement blended in the atmosphere as the morning sun began to heat the field.

At approximately 10 a.m., the feeling of restlessness overwhelming the Marines, sailors, families and friends came to an end as the battalion members, nicknamed the "Rhinos," pulled up to Victory Field in a convoy of four white buses – perhaps golden chariots to those who awaited, watched and cheered.

The animated crowd of family and friends enveloped the 146 Rhinos and welcomed them home with firm hugs and a barrage of kisses.

While the Rhinos' operated in air bases in Ar Ramadi, Al Taqaddum and Fallujah, they refueled aircrafts, maintained runways and went on convoy missions throughout the entire province.

Both parties – the deployed and the waiting – sensed that what they had left behind in February was simply their light at the end of the tunnel. That recent September day brought a feeling of daylight and joy, and for some Marines, a new source of light – newborn children waiting to meet their fathers for the first time.

Four and a half months ago, Kinsey Giles was born as her father, Staff Sgt. Jason D. Giles, an engineer equipment operator with the "Rhinos," was serving in Iraq. The morning of Sept. 6 was the first time they met.

"It was love at first sight," said Staff Sgt. Giles, an Annapolis, Md., native, holding his bright, blue-eyed daughter dressed in pink. "This is so much that makes up for the time I've been gone. It feels amazing. It was tough being away from the family but it's something Marines' got to do."

"Where are we going now that Dad's home?" Giles asked his, 4-year-old daughter, Jensen, and 3-year-old son, Michael.

"Hawaii," they answered simultaneously.

Danielle Redtfeldt, wife

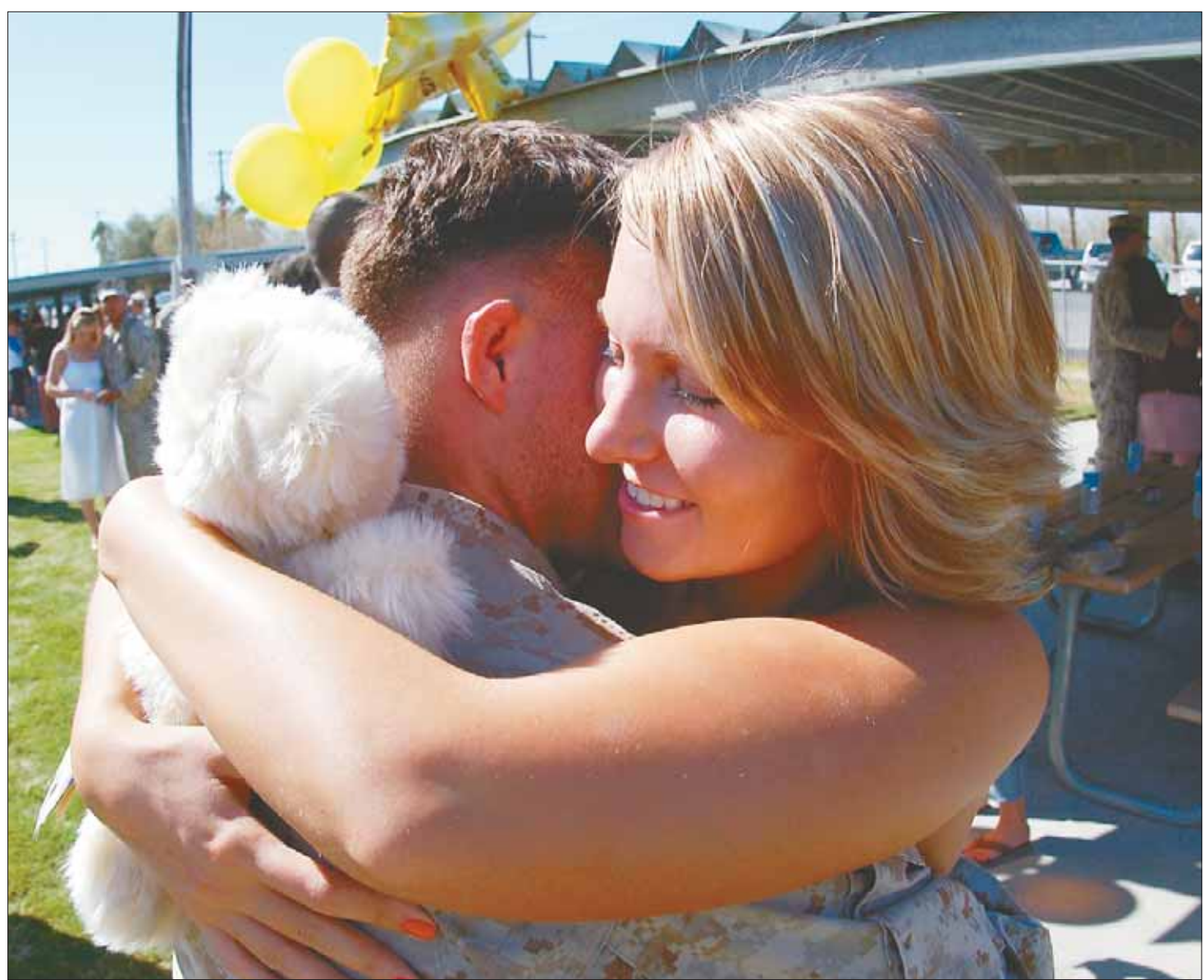
of Lance Cpl. Joshua T. Redtfeldt, combat engineer with the battalion, was also waiting to greet her husband with a new member of their family, 4-month-old Carmen.

Danielle, a Selah, Wash., native, and her daughter arrived on Victory Field three hours before the buses came. She picked up Carmen out of her stroller as soon as she reached the shaded area of Victory Field. She did not put her back until her father arrived.

"I am so nervous," said Danielle anxiously pacing back and forth before the buses arrived. "I'm nervous for him to see his daughter for the first time. The pregnancy was hard for us. Him being away made it very difficult, but we got to talk a lot. He tells me that he cannot wait to have her in his arms."

"Him and Carmen are going to get to know each other really well as soon as he gets here," she added as baby Carmen kept smiling in her arms. "I am so excited and nervous. I can't believe he'll be here soon. I've been waiting for this day since before he left."

The Rhinos had to leave some Leathernecks behind due to injuries. Nonetheless, they maintained cohesion during the deployment. Some Rhinos, such as Cpl. George Houle, from Manteca, Calif.; Cpl. Christopher Sims, from Lubbock, Texas; and Lance Cpl. Phillip Tallent, from Kennett, Mo., never lost touch



LANCE CPL. MICHAEL S. CIFUENTES

Rutland, Ohio, native, is welcomed home with affection by his wife, Nicole, on Combat Center's Victory Field Sept. 6.

when their fellow Marines set off to Iraq.

The three aircraft rescue firefighters waited for their buddies to come home.

"I know it was a successful deployment for them over there," said Houle. "They started a corporals course in TQ [Al Taqaddum]. So, for the most part, it was a very

productive deployment. It's like getting another tool to add to their toolbox."

"I kept up with most of them out there through e-mails," he continued. "I know what they want when they get back – some decent food, cold beers and to spend time with their wives or girlfriends. We're going to show them a

good time when they get back – and they're buying."

Tonya Edwards, wife of mechanic Cpl. Adam W. Edwards, counted the number of days her husband has been gone. She constructed a chain using paper links for each day with a small journal entry on each link.

"Today is day 194," said

Tonya, an Estes Park, Colo., native. "I am absolutely thrilled. I've been up since 5 a.m. I am also thrilled that this is his last deployment."

The excitement did not cease as the Rhinos walked off Victory Field with their families. What they desired and longed for over the 7-month period is now reality.



Members of the Combat Center color guard place flags in the ground during a memorial service on Sept. 8, at Patriot Park in Cathedral City, CA., in honor of all 9/11 victims and service members who lost their life supporting the War on Terror. **CPL. HEIDI E. LOREDO**

HEALING, from A1

Immediately after the attacks, patriotism surged, but in the five years since the terrorist attacks, patriotism has waned. Flags no longer dot every residential block and roadside "God Bless America" signs have weathered. The decline of patriotism is only natural as time passes and as people become disillusioned with the war.

"Personally I am very pleased with the tenor of this event because it allows people on either side of the political spectrum to realize this is all about healing," said legislative assistant to Riverside County Supervisor Roy Wilson. "Once a young person or not so young person has enlisted in the service of his country, he doesn't have any choice but to defend the country, to follow the orders he or she is given. There are a lot of people who would like to make decision makers out of the troops, and that's not their jobs."

The memorial gave supporters a chance to unite, not

to agree or disagree with the war, but to commemorate the sacrifices of forward deployed troops.

The flags staked to the ground were intended as a demonstration of love, not hatred towards fellow man, said Pettis, who said the field was his way of honoring the Marines and sailors stationed at Twentynine Palms. "It is in their spirit that we celebrate their memory today."

Chaplain Starkey, a former Marine who served during Vietnam, spoke to the audience as a man who simply serves those who serve.

"I come to these events to remember the sacrifice that was made on behalf of all of us," he said. "I'm reminded that not only do we need to stand behind every flag, but also recognize the ultimate sacrifice of those who loved us all so much to be able to lay it all on the line."

"And sacrifice doesn't just come from the military," Starkey continued. "It comes from every American, to stand behind those who are

protecting you so that you would every day wake up and live a sacrificial life on behalf of your country men as well.

The images of the terrorist attacks are indelible: an airplane flying into the World Trade Center, a flag tucked amid the rubble of the fallen towers, President Bush announcing the attacks after speaking to schoolchildren. Americans hungered for information about the attacks and struggled to make the unex-

plainable understandable.

"Our nation is strong because of our diversity of people, diversity of belief, and diversity of speech," said Pettis. "Because this is perhaps our greatest strength as a nation we must be willing to stand up to those who wish to stifle that diversity and silence our voices from without or from within. As a nation we celebrate our triumphs and share in our tragedies. Today we gather to mourn but also to mend."



The Combat Center color guard make their way to markers set on the field where 3,000 American flags were positioned. **CPL. HEIDI E. LOREDO**

LIMA 3/12, from A1

When the inclement weather passed the Marines of Lima Battery were back at it, sending rounds down range from four of the six guns used to conduct the shoot.

"It went pretty good," said Cpl. Mike Jones, a section leader from Sonora, Calif. "It was slow at times, but that's just the way things go sometimes."

Although the battery has been deployed to Iraq in the past, many Marines currently with the battalion have not.

"This will be the battery's second time to Iraq, but a lot of the guys who went are gone now," said Demosthenous, explaining that with permanent changes of station and Marines getting out of the Corps, many of his Marines will be getting their first taste of combat.

And some of those Marines have been in the fleet less than two months.

Pfc. Robert W. Allison graduated from the Marine Corps Cannon Crewman Course at Fort Sill, Okla., recently and checked-in to Lima Battery Aug. 12. This shoot was his first training exercise with his new battery.

Allison and eight other Marines who checked-in to Lima Battery at the same time have been doing on-the-job training, trying to learn the ropes before heading overseas.

"I feel like I'm ready to go," said Allison, a Placentia, Calif., native. "As far as artillery goes, I'm prepared. I'm ready to get over there and get it over with."

With the deployment right around the corner, Jones feels confident in the abilities of the Marines on either side of him.

"A lot of the new guys are ready to go," said Jones, who will be returning to Iraq for his second time. "Senior lance corporals and corporals are ready to take on whatever leadership positions they are faced with. We're ready to get over there."

The battery is scheduled to depart later this month.



Marines from Gun 5, Lima Battery, 3rd Battalion, 12th Marine Regiment, load a round into an M198 Howitzer during a shoot Sept. 6 at the Combat Center's Lead Mountain range. **CPL. EVAN M. EAGAN**



MCAGCC Band marks 30th anniversary for 200,000 at Celtic festival

CPL. BRIAN TUTHILL
COMBAT CORRESPONDENT

ESTES PARK, Colo. – Making their sixth annual appearance, the Combat Center Band performed four days and nights of concerts and parades as part of the 30th annual Longs Peak Scottish-Irish Highland Festival in Estes Park, Colo., Sept. 7-10.

Serving as the anchor band for ceremonies, Combat Center Marines were joined by three other musical units from around the U.S. and Canada in the nightly "Tattoo" field concerts, as well as daily morning ceremonies. The 3rd Army Infantry Regiment "Old Guard" Fife and Drum Corps was the only other band besides the Marines to return to the festival from last year. The Combat Center Band is the only musical unit to be invited back for more than two consecutive years.

The highland festival is one of the largest of its kind in the country. It is a celebration of Celtic heritage attended by about 200,000 people each year, and is complete with bagpipes, meat pies, haggis, highland sports and kilts. The rain brought through to the area by what was tropical storm John in the Pacific Ocean posed a new challenge for the ceremonies this year.

Despite the rain, which many said only added to the traditional atmosphere of the British Isles, attendance was not down as patrons showed up in rain gear for the event, festival coordinators said.

The Combat Center Band, who traveled nearly 1,000 miles to the festival, had 12 major performances during their stay in Estes Park, almost exclusively in their crisply-pressed blue-white dress uniforms. For every outdoor performance they had at the festival, they were met with rain.

"What makes Estes Park a unique experience is the international flavor of it," said Staff Sgt. Joe Streeter, Combat Center Band drum major. "The heritage, the different groups coming together from other countries is great.

"I see it very much in Scottish and Irish heritage as they live by their traditions and what came before so similarly to the way the Marine Corps does," Streeter continued. "They have the highland games and they still wear their kilts and respect their traditions."

The four main bands of the festival were joined together in what was called the "massed bands," which marched together and played traditional Scottish and Irish songs such as "Scotland the Brave," "Flowers of the Forest," "The Black Bear," "Prince Edward Isle" and "Amazing Grace."

Each of the bands also had their own individual field shows during the evening Tattoo and the morning concerts. The Combat Center Band, who were said to be the talk of the show last year, changed their hit lineup to add more current, upbeat tunes and jazz numbers.

See BAND, B4





Anything out of the ordinary?

COURTESY PHOTO



This is why you should take a look under your vehicle.

Be careful of our little friends

In the heat of summer, desert tortoises have learned that it can be 10 to 15 degrees cooler in the shade. Sometimes, they choose an unsafe source for their shade. Fortunately, in this case, the tortoise was observed before the vehicle went anywhere. Marines and local residents are asked to look under their vehicle before moving it, especially if they're parked in a tortoise habitat. NREA reminds readers that tortoises are protected by the Endangered Species Act, yet they've done quite well at MCAGCC for the last several decades while Marines have been getting the highest quality of desert training.

COURTESY PHOTO

New fiscal year leaves Marines with career decisions

LANCE CPL. DEREK B. CARLSON
MCRD PARRIS ISLAND

MARINE CORPS RECRUIT DEPOT PARRIS ISLAND, S.C. — With a new fiscal year around the corner, the time to decide whether to re-enlist is closing in fast on many Marines.

Marines who decide to re-enlist must submit their package during the fiscal year of their end of active service date, however, there are many factors to consider before making the final decision.

According to Master Sgt. Juan Allen, Depot career retention specialist, all Marines are required to meet with a career retention specialist or commanding officer several times a year to guide them in weighing their options and making smart career decisions before re-enlisting.

The content of the career meetings is designed to educate Marines on key re-enlistment incentives such as bonuses, duty stations, education and lateral moves, which is the changing of a Marines' military occupation specialty.

One re-enlistment incentive starting fiscal year 2007, and specific to the Depot, is seven or 10 days of permissive temporary additional duty.

"Our most valuable asset is the individual Marine. My goal is to increase our focus on retaining our Marines by use of all means available," stated Brig. Gen. Paul E. Lefebvre, commanding general, MCRD Parris Island/Eastern Recruiting Region, in a Depot Bulletin. "The purpose of providing PTAD [permissive temporary additional duty] as an incen-

tive for re-enlisting is to allow our Marines to take care of professional, family and personal readiness matters."

First term Marines are required to attend five meetings regarding their life goals and plans for their Marine Corps career during their term of enlistment.

"I like to focus on the individual Marine and their goals before discussing re-enlistment options with the Marine," said Allen.

All Marines who have already served at least one term are required to attend three career meetings per term of enlistment.

In order to help prepare Marines for these meetings, a new Internet accessible system, known as the Automated Career Retention System, has been created.

ACRS is a razor edged sword when it comes to cutting into re-enlistment options. Not only does it aid Marines, but it also is a tool used by their career retention specialist as well.

On one side, ACRS allows Marines easy access to vital information on re-enlistment opportunities. Marines can quickly access ACRS through their Marine Online account, and from there, access the entire MOS manu-

al, requirements for special schools and duties available upon re-enlistment and their personal records all at the same time. This allows simple and convenient comparisons for Marines. A checklist also provided through ACRS breaks down preparations for career meetings into a few simple steps.

"ACRS is only as good as the Marines who use it," said Allen. "It is a powerful resource all Marines should use to help influence their career choices."

On the other side, the system also helps career retention specialists by enabling them to send a message straight to a Marine's MOL account to notify them of an upcoming career meeting. Also, by looking at ACRS, a career retention specialist is able to compare a Marine's cutting scores, Armed Services Vocational Aptitude Battery scores and education and training records all together, in order to help determine what is best for a Marine, and where they can best apply their skills.

Information available on ACRS is updated weekly to ensure Marines are able to research the most current information regarding their re-enlistment options.

After reviewing the ups and downs of re-enlisting, it is up to the individual Marine to decide whether or not to follow through with another term of service. Once a Marine always a Marine, active duty or not, Allen emphasized every Marine should be educated and never act blindly while making dramatic career decisions such as signing the dotted line.

SPORT SHORTS

COMMUNITY CENTER GYM CLOSED

The Community Center Gym will be closed from September 25 to 29 for maintenance work. For more information please call 830-3380.

2nd ANNUAL MCCES FUN RUN

MCCES is holding a Fun Run Sept. 29. The run is open to all military, DOD employees, and dependents. The race will begin at building 1831. Be there and prove your metal. The marathon will begin at 5 a.m. and the 10 kilometer and the half-marathon will begin at 7. The cost for each race is: \$15 for 10K, \$20 for half-marathon, \$25 for marathon and \$80 for a 5-member team for the half-marathon. For more information call Lt. Col. Tolbert at 830-7432.

4TH ANNUAL "RUN FOR THE TROOPS"

The Palms Springs Hogs are putting on their 4th Annual Hog Ride Oct. 21 to raise money to donate to the Navy Marine Corps Relief Society. The Ride will start at the Harley Dealership on Indian and Interstate 10 and finish at Pappy and Harriet's for an afternoon of food, live music, a Bike Show, the "slow" Race, raffles and an all around good time. Registration starts at 8 and ride starts at 10 a.m. Military can ride for free. For more information, call Ray Caldwell at 830-6323 or 953-5301.

LEISURE

CHRISTIAN WOMEN'S FELLOWSHIP

Religious Ministries Directorate invites you to Christian Women's Fellowship, a non-denominational ministry offered to all women. A Welcome Brunch will be held Tuesday from 9 to 11:30 a.m. Successive weekly meetings for Bible study and fellowship will be held Tuesdays from 9 to 11 a.m. Free childcare for these events is provided in the Village Center by Child Development Center staff. CWF Meetings are held in the West Wing of the Protestant Chapel. For more information, call Jennifer Faunce at 368-9212 or Cindy Wills at 368-9502.

Learning Resource Center offers step in right direction

LANCE CPL. KATELYN A. KNAUER
COMBAT CORRESPONDENT

For any new Marine, the title noncommissioned officer is something many strive to earn. It comes with knowledge, understanding and some hard work. However, some become complacent with where they are, and most times try to avoid the things that could increase their composite score and help them earn an extra stripe.

Fortunately, the Combat Center offers a resource that can be used when striving for the next rank. The Learning Resource Center located on the south end of building 1527 offers online Marine Corps Institute Courses without the hassle of sending in the paperwork and waiting for the results to get posted.

"It is a tremendous asset to Marines and their commanders that is extremely under used," said Maj. William Yates, modeling and simulations officer.

Along with online MCI's the LRC offers a variety of other programs that can expand Marines' knowledge. They also have hours to accommodate most Marines' schedules. They open at 10 a.m. and close at 8 p.m. Monday through Saturday.

"The LRC provides 20 new Navy and Marine Corps Intranet desktops - though users do not need an NMCI account to log-in - that offer Marines the ability to access Marine Link, Marine Net, MCI online, MyPay and NMCI Outlook Web access as well as the 'gold suite' of NMCI applications," said Yates. "General purpose web access is permitted as long as no one else needs to use one of the workstations for training or primary military education class."

The LRC, which is underutilized right now, has certified proctors to administer online testing for things such as MCIs and other PME classes.

"The main thing here is MCIs," said Jay Nelson, LRC senior network analyst. "We have the whole basic package of MCI's web based. We are here to help the lance corporals and corporals get their cutting score."

Along with individual training the LRC can be reserved for individual units who want to administer PMEs to larger groups. To reserve the LRC, a unit must call in advance to ensure they will get the time schedule they need.

"The amount of information available and the resources that a Marine has here is definitely not being used to its full potential," said Donavan C. Miskell, video teleconference technician.

Aside from online testing the LRC also has two video teleconferencing suites located at Combat Camera and one at the Tactical Training and Exercise Control Group building.

"It can be accessed 24/7 with scheduling through me," said Miskell. "It is a great asset and helps cut down on costs for units because the Marines can stay in their current location for classes instead of being sent out here. It's a good instructional tool used to connect bases in remote locations."

With so much to offer it would seem the LRC should be packed with Marines trying to advance their careers. Instead the LRC is averaging 300 Marines a month when there are thousands aboard the Combat Center. If Marines want to step it up a notch and move up the chain, the LRC has everything to help them along in gaining rank and Marine Corps knowledge.

CFC kicks off campaign



Alesia Ellis from the Morongo Basin United Way shares program information with Staff Sgt. Delbert D. Templeton and 1st Sgt. Velda Harmon-Marks during the CFC kickoff Sept. 8.

LANCE CPL. MICHAEL S. CIFENTES
COMBAT CORRESPONDENT

Brig. Gen. Douglas M. Stone, Combat Center commanding general, kicked off the 2006 Combined Federal Campaign Sept. 8. at Victory Field as Combat Center service members and government employees, joined to support the campaign and feast on grilled burgers, hot dogs and cold beverages.

All who attended learned about the nine local charitable agencies and more than 1,700 national and international charitable agencies. There were tables displaying the campaign's services to service members, family members and the local community. People were given the opportunity to interact with representatives from the nine local agencies who had booths displaying their services.

The CFC's goal is to raise funds for those agencies. The local CFC's goal this year is "100 percent contact" meaning every person aboard the Combat Center should be informed on what the CFC has to offer and how people can help by donating, said Brenda Roberts, Combat Center

adjutant and CFC chairperson.

"It's important that we teach everyone aboard the base about these charities," said Roberts. "Once people know about the campaign and the charities in it, they will have the opportunity to contribute to the charities."

The campaign will end Nov. 3. Along with the "100 percent contact," the campaign's second goal is to raise 225,000 pledges this year. Last year the campaign pledged 160,000 pledges, which is only 60 percent of Combat Center personnel contacted. The campaign members are confident they can reach out to at least 60,000 more people, said Roberts.

There are 41 representatives who work in the many units and work sections throughout the base, including civilian work sections. These representatives can be contacted at any time to make donations or for any questions involving the campaign

and how one can contribute to its mission.

"When people pledge, unless they are pledging cash or check, they pledge, or donate, an allotment from their pay," explained Roberts. "The minimum allotment from pay is \$2-a-month, which would be \$24-a-year."

Sgt. Maj. William Johnson, Combat Center sergeant major, spoke to interested personnel who came to the event. He mentioned the benefits of contributing to the charities on behalf of such a large campaign and how it can positively affect any individual.

"Each of us has something we can relate to," said Johnson, referring to the many non-profit organizations. "What you have to do is make it personal. This is an opportunity to let people donate to the communities, whether it is here or in their hometowns."

"Our views and actions have to be proactive - taking

care of the problem before it exists - preventing it," he continued. "This is a chance to put some money up front that would go a long ways. Just think about what it has done in the past, and what it can and may do for you. Anyone can find a charity that they know they can relate too."

"Every little bit helps," he added. "We can make a difference. If you put enough crumbs together, you can make bread. It will make a difference in someone's life."

All who came together that afternoon on Victory Field became aware of why the campaign is a big deal to the local community, as well as communities around the nation and world.

"If you ever wondered how you can make a difference in the world, the CFC is a great place to start," said Sgt. Thann Sak, Combat Center protocol personnel. "It only takes a little to make a big difference."

BAND, from B1



CPL. BRIAN A. TUTHILL

The Combat Center Band drum line warms up before marching in a 1.5-mile parade through the streets of Estes Park, Colo., where thousands of spectators turned out and lined the streets as part of the 30th annual Longs Peak Scottish-Irish Highland Festival.



CPL. BRIAN A. TUTHILL

In his "cammie kilt" and combat boots, Combat Center Band tuba player Staff Sgt. Joel M. Daniel is encouraged by the party band to see "how low he can go" during their performance at a Scottish party in Estes Park, Colo.

They also were part of a 1.5-mile parade, which had thousands of people lining the streets and cheering them on.

Each song the Marines played, both for the Tattoo and mornings, had the crowd on their feet for standing ovations. The band left the field each time to "The Marine's Hymn" and were always nearly drowned out by the cheers and applause from the audience.

"I think the unit is simply tremendous right now," said Streeter, who has helped prepare his Marines over past weeks for the trip. "It's obvious from the response of the crowd, because when the crowd is louder than the band, you know you're doing something right."

The band faced other challenges during the trip such as a demanding schedule, unpredictable and often wet weather, and constant maintenance of their uniforms. For many of the band members, many of whom arrived in the last three months, their time in Estes Park has been one of the toughest things they have done thus far with the band.

The trip comes at the peak of the band's travel season and only shortly after they played at a highland festival in Pleasanton, Calif., over Memorial Day weekend and in Denver for the 1st Marine Division Association reunion Aug. 24 to 27. The musicians have had little or no breaks in past weeks because of their busy schedule.

"This show is very hard on a professional level," said



CPL. BRIAN A. TUTHILL

Cpl. Jared Oess, saxophone player with the Marine Corps Air Ground Combat Center Band, performs a slow jazz solo during an evening performance at the 30th annual Longs Peak Scottish-Irish Highland Festival in Estes Park, Colo.

Sgt. Matt Heen, a 28-year-old tuba player with the band who has played in Estes Park five times. "Every day you have to be ready in uniform for performances, and the whole thing is hard physically and mentally and takes a lot out of you.

"This year was the first time I've ever seen it rain this much," he said. "That's very hard because it affects some of the instruments. For every performance it rained, and whether we were in the grass or the dirt something would always get on our white trousers, but they have to be perfect for the next time. I had my trousers in the sink scrubbing with detergent to lift some of the stains some nights."

One of the most memorable aspects of the trip for the Marines was attending the nightly Ceilidh (pronounced "kay-lee"), a traditional Scottish party attended by musicians, athletes, benefactors and other guests to the festival at night after the Tattoo.

"The Ceilidh is a party with drinking, dancing and a lot of fun where everyone goes to unwind after a long day of work," said Heen, a Williston, N.D., native.

One addition to the Ceilidhs people seemed to enjoy was the "party band," a small ensemble of about 10 Marines who perform lively numbers to smaller audiences and got the crowd of about 200 people on their feet dancing and singing. They played a mix of Motown, jazz, revamped versions of their regular concert songs and a few satirical songs for the Celtic crowd.

"The party band comes out at the Ceilidh and they bring so much energy to that crowd," said Heen. "They are not in uniform for that, so it's a much more personal experience for the people there. When they step out there, the

crowd knows something special is going on.

"What else is neat about the party band is they have not changed much in the past few years, but every time it looks like the first time they perform," he continued. "They interact with the crowd and it makes people feel like they are a part of it."

Another source of pride for Combat Center Marines is their relationship with the Old Guard Fife and Drum Corps, who they first teamed up with for last year's performance.

"The Old Guard is one of the most outstanding groups of musicians I have met," said Streeter. "Those guys are unbelievable, but they feel the same way about us. They are specialty musicians from the Military District of Washington and we're just 'Joe Schmo' Marines, but they think the world of us, and we think the world of them."

The Marines departed Colorado Monday, spending more than 12 hours traveling back to the Combat Center, arriving Tuesday morning around 1:30 a.m. for a well-earned break.