

Serving the MCAGCC
Community at
Twentynine Palms, Calif.

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OBSERVATION POST



BULK RATE
U.S. Postage
PAID
29 Palms, CA
Permit No. 8

THIS ISSUE

A4 - 27 Sniper

A10 - Alcohol Treatment

B2 - Toys for Tots Run

HOT TOPICS

MILITARY POST OFFICE WILL BE OPEN SATURDAY'S

The military post office will be open every Saturday during December from 5:30 a.m. to 12 p.m. so military members can pick up packages.

FRESH CUT CHRISTMAS TREES AT THE HOME STORE

Fresh cut Christmas Trees are now available at the Home Store, Bldg. #1024, while they last. The trees range in cost from \$10.99 to \$49.99. Types of trees include: Natural Douglas Fir 3' to 8', Sheared Douglas Fir 5' to 8' and Noble pine 5' to 7'. Home Store hours are from 10 a.m. to 8 p.m., Monday through Friday and 10 a.m. to 6 p.m. Saturdays and Sundays.

CMC PLANNING GUIDANCE 2006 AVAILABLE

Combat Camera has the Commandant of the Marine Corps' 2006 planning guidance available on DVD. Commanders may obtain a copy at Combat Camera Television, Building 1653, for use in their discussions with their Marines, sailors and civilians. They can be reached at 830-5477 or 830-6205.

BOURKE ROAD AND 3RD STREET CLOSED FOR REPAVING

Bourke Road will be closed for repaving until approximately Jan. 5. Please use Adobe Road, Sixth Street, or Tenth Street to access Del Valle Road while the other intersections are closed for repaving. Third Street between Del Valle and Brown Road will be closed for repaving until approximately Jan. 5 as well.

MCX HOME STORE: TAKE YOUR PET'S PICTURE WITH SANTA

The Marine Corps Exchange Home Store will be offering free "Take Your Pets Picture with Santa Claus." Saturday at the Home Store from 10:15 to 1 p.m. Receive 25 percent off on all pet supplies for one day only. Your pet must be a cat or dog. Dogs need to be on a leash and cat owners must hold cats or place them in a carrier.

COMING NEXT ISSUE

- Free Towing
- Toys for Tots Luncheon
- Family Fun Festival

THIS DAY IN MARINE CORPS HISTORY

Dec. 15, 1968

3rd Battalion, 7th Marine Regiment commenced search and destroy Operation Citrus in Vietnam.



'Tis the season to be jolly

Members of the Combat Center Band perform during the City of Palm Springs' Holiday Concert at the Palm Springs Convention Center Dec. 8.

Marine Corps seeks new way to look at PT

LANCE CPL. REGINA N. ORTIZ
COMBAT CORRESPONDENT

Adapting and overcoming is part of the Marine lifestyle. Changes in the type of combat operations Marines take part in, including terrain, environment, gear and foot traveling distances, has called for a change in physical training throughout the Marine Corps.

A Concept for Functional Fitness, a document describing a new approach to physical training that will prepare Marines physically and mentally for today's combat operations, was approved by the deputy commandant for Combat Development and Integration, Lt. Gen. James F. Amos.

The concept was announced in MARADMIN 579/06 Dec. 7, in an attempt to provoke a debate on the most effective approach to refocus Marines' physical fitness with combat readiness.

The concept describes Marines as "combat athletes," comparing the way sports athletes train for the season to the way Marines train for the varying rigors of combat. Though, the difference between the two ideas is broad, and combat isn't a game, the principles are similar even though the differences are extreme. There is no time limit in combat, the rules fluctuate, there are no timeouts or half-times, and it cannot be called off in case of bad weather or



LANCE CPL. SHAWN SPITLER

Marines in the Marine Corps Martial Arts Program buddy-carry each other through a combat conditioning drill, a similar aspect with the Concept for Functional Fitness.

lack of players. But just as sports athletes need to be ready for game day, a Marine's body and mind must be trained and prepared for physical stresses on the battlefield.

In today's combat operations, Marines are required to wear body

armor and equipment in temperatures around 120 degrees, while patrolling urban environments, often crossing obstacles, while lifting, pulling, throwing, moving and running, in some instances under fire. While endurance will always be a vital skill

for Marines to have, the more common type of running seen in combat is short and fast while carrying heavy loads, rather than long endurance runs.

See FITNESS A13

Dr. Blackjack gives Marines dose of reality

LANCE CPL. NICOLE A. LAVINE
COMBAT CORRESPONDENT

Former Marine Corps lieutenant colonel Dr. Jack "Blackjack" Matthews shared his personal stories on the horrors of alcohol

abuse at the base theater Tuesday and Wednesday.

Matthews has been conducting alcohol abuse briefs since 1997 and said he intends to continue his work in hopes of helping young, addicted service members.

In his brief, Matthews gave several accounts on what the alcohol abuse did to his career, friends, family, health, and life as a whole.

"Alcoholism is repeated behavior and expecting different results," explained Matthews in his brief to the crowd.

"They say alcoholism is a psychological disease," continued Matthews. "But I think mine was more spiritual, a disease of the soul." From the time Matthews had his first drink at the age of 17, he said he was instantly dependent on alcohol to take away whatever pain or difficulties existed in his life.

His dependency grew steadily worse until he found himself choosing a bottle over his friends,

and even his own family.

"I failed the test as a father to my sons," said Matthews. "But I am able to pick-up my 10-year-old grandson, hug him, and tell him how much I love him. I can't do that for his father or his uncles, and I certainly couldn't have done it as a drunk. But I can do it for him."

For those in the crowd, like Cpl. Agustin A. Molinanauro, Company B, Headquarters Battalion, the damage brought to families by alcohol abuse hits a strong chord.

"When he started talking about his grandkids and his family, that had a big impact on me," said Molinanauro.

See BLACKJACK, A8



LANCE CPL. NICOLE A. LAVINE

Dr. Jack "Blackjack" Matthews talks to Marines and sailors at the base theater Tuesday about his addiction to alcohol while he was an active duty Marine.



Commandant of the Marine Corps, Gen. James G. Conway recently published the Commandants Planning Guidance to be reviewed by all Marines prior to Dec. 22.

This document can be found by visiting the Marine Corps Web site at <http://www.usmc.mil>.

CHRISTIAN WORSHIP SERVICES

ROMAN CATHOLIC SERVICES

Immaculate Heart of Mary Chapel

Sun 7:30 a.m. Rosary
 Sun 8 a.m. Catholic Mass*
 Sun 9 a.m. Faith Formation/CCD (Bldg1551)
 Sun 9 a.m. Military Council of Catholic Women (Bldg. 1551)
 Sun 9:15 a.m. Confessions+
 Sun 10 a.m. Rosary
 Sun 10:30 a.m. Catholic Mass
 Sun 10:30 a.m. Children's Liturgy of the Word
 Sun 4 p.m. Choir Practice
 Sun 4:30 p.m. Rosary
 Sun 5 p.m. Catholic Mass
 Sun 6 p.m. Cyrus Young Adult Group
 18-35 years of age married or single (3rd Sunday of the month)
 Fri 12:15 – 4:30 p.m. Exposition/Adoration Most Blessed Sacrament (1st Friday Each Month)

Ash Wednesday and Holy Days of Obligation Masses

11:45 a.m. and 5:30 p.m. Immaculate Heart of Mary Chapel
 11:30 a.m. Robert E. Bush Naval Hospital
Village Center
 Sun 9 a.m. Military Council of Catholic Women*
 Sun 9 a.m. Faith Formation/CCD

NON-DENOMINATIONAL CHRISTIAN SERVICE

Christ Chapel

Sun 8 a.m. Worship*
 Tue 7 p.m. Praise and Worship*

TRADITIONAL SERVICE

Christ Chapel

Sun 9:30 a.m. Worship

INDEPENDENT BAPTIST SERVICE

Christ Chapel

Sun 11 p.m. Worship

LAY-LED GOSPEL SERVICE

Christ Chapel

Sun 12:30 p.m. Worship

LAY-LED APOSTOLIC SERVICE

Christ Chapel

Sun 3 p.m. Worship

Christ Chapel

2 p.m. Study of Book of Acts

MID-WEEK EVENTS

MONDAY

Immaculate Heart of Mary Chapel
 Mon-Fri 11:45 a.m. Catholic Mass

Ocotillo Housing

7 p.m. Officer's Christian Fellowship
 Call Lt. Cmdr. Faunce 830-6654 for location

TUESDAY

Immaculate Heart of Mary Chapel

5 – 7:30 p.m. Catechist Meeting (Second Tuesday of the month)
 4 – 5:30 p.m. Children's RCIA
 6 p.m. Baptism Class 1st Tuesday each month
Christ Chapel
 9 a.m. Christian Women Fellowship*
 7 p.m. Praise and Worship
C&E Mess Hall Bldg. 1660
 11:30 a.m. Bible Study
 Chaplain Flint 830-6187
Base Housing
 6 p.m. All Hands Bible Study
 Chaplain Taylor 830-7413 for location

WEDNESDAY

Village Center

11:30 a.m. Prayer Meeting in the Prayer Room
 Chaplain Flint 830-6187
 6 p.m. Right of Christian Initiation for Adults*

Immaculate Heart of Mary

6 -7 p.m. Life Teen/Youth Group#
Christ Chapel

5 p.m. IHM Choir Rehearsal
 5 p.m. Protestant Choir Rehearsal
 5:30 p.m. Catholic Choir Rehearsal
 7 p.m. Lay-Led Gospel Bible Study

THURSDAY

Immaculate Heart of Mary Chapel

7 p.m. Knights of Columbus
 1st Thursday of the Month

Christ Chapel

7 p.m. Lay-Led Apostolic Bible Study

Legend

*Indicates Child Care Provided
 +Appointments can be made for Confessions by calling 830-6456/6646
 # Resumes Fall 2006

Birth announcements



KADEN ANTHONY JENNINGS

Son of Lance Cpl. and Mrs. Anthony Jennings
 Born Nov. 3, 2006, weighing 6 lbs. 4 oz. and measuring 19.6 inches.

ALANNAH JAYLN HAWKINS

Daughter of Seaman and Mrs. Christopher Hawkins
 Born Nov. 4, 2006, weighing 5 lbs. 4 oz. and measuring 19.9 inches.

DAVID WILLIAM CADE JONES

Son of Cpl. and Mrs. Clayton Jones
 Born Nov. 7, 2006, weighing 7 lbs. 9 oz. and measuring 20.9 inches.

CODY LANE BROOM

Son of Lance Cpl. and Mrs. William Broom
 Born Nov. 10, 2006, weighing 8 lbs. 1 oz. and measuring 21 inches.

GAVIN DONAVON COHEN

Son of Capt. and Mrs. Ryan B. Cohen
 Born Nov. 14, 2006, weighing 7 lbs. 12 oz. and measuring 21 inches.

ADDISON ELIZABETH MAGUIRE

Daughter of Sgt. and Mrs. Jason Maguire
 Born Nov. 15, 2006, weighing 6 lbs. 12 oz. and measuring 19.5 inches.

EVANGELINE RUSSELL

Daughter of Mr. and Mrs. William J. Russell
 Born Nov. 1, 2006, weighing 5 lbs. and measuring 19 inches.

MEADOW CAPRI MASSE

Daughter of Pfc. and Mrs. Thomas Masse
 Born Nov. 1, 2006, weighing 17 lbs. 12 oz. and measuring 20 inches.

JOSHUA FREDY ESQUIVEL

Son of Sgt. and Mrs. Fredy Esquivel
 Born Nov. 1, 2006, weighing 7 lbs. 6 oz. and measuring 20 inches.

ISAIAH DWAYNE WELCH

Son of Lance Cpl. and Mrs. Dwayne Welch
 Born Nov. 1, 2006, weighing 6 lbs. 14 oz. and measuring 21.2 inches.

DAVID VINCENT BIGGERS IV

Son of Cpl. and Mrs. David V. Biggers III
 Born Nov. 2, 2006, weighing 8 lbs. 4 oz. and measuring 21.3 inches.

Assemblyman Cook takes oath of office, begins first term in State Assembly

PRESS RELEASE

FROM THE OFFICE OF ASSEMBLYMAN
PAUL COOK

SACRAMENTO, Calif. – Assemblyman Paul Cook, R-Yucca Valley, took the oath of office Dec. 4 as the new representative for the 65th Assembly District. The ceremony at the State Capitol marked the beginning of 2007-2008 Legislative Session.

Cook stated, “I’m honored to have this opportunity to serve the people of the 65th Assembly District. This is a new challenge for me, and the challenges we face in California are daunting. Yet, rather than be discouraged, I look at it as an opportunity to make real changes for California citizens by attacking our problems with vigor and persistence.”

He continued, “Riverside and San Bernardino counties are burgeoning areas. They need a strong voice commensurate with this increased importance. In this state, places like LA and San Francisco tend to get the lion’s share of the attention – and unfairly so. It’s my job to make sure we have a seat at the table and a say in the outcome.”

Cook served 26 years in the US military before retiring from the U.S. Marine Corps as a colonel.

He has been honored with the Bronze Star, two Purple Hearts, and numerous other awards for his actions in combat. Cook and his wife, Jeanne, live in Yucca Valley, where he served terms as city councilman and mayor. He has taught anti-terrorism classes at UC Riverside and currently teaches courses at Copper Mountain College. He holds a master's degree in political science from UC Riverside and a master's degree in Public Administration from CSU San Bernardino.

“We have a tough agenda this year. We’re staring down a \$5.5 billion budget – a deficit that must be addressed through structural changes, not by raising taxes. We must fix our plagued prison system, address illegal immigration, and shake up the status quo in California politics by changing the way Legislative districts are drawn,” Cook said. “I’m anxious to tackle all of these issues.”

He succeeds outgoing Assemblyman Russ Bogh, who was ineligible to seek another term in the Assembly due to term limits. The 65th Assembly District includes the communities of Moreno Valley, Hemet, Yucaipa, Perris, San Jacinto, Banning, Twentynine Palms, Beaumont, Menifee, Calimesa and Big Bear Lake.

Introduction and refresher for Hazard Material/Hazardous Waste Generation and Handling Course

NATURAL RESOURCES AND ENVIRONMENTAL AFFAIRS

The Hazardous Material/Hazardous Waste Handling Course will be conducted aboard the Combat Center Feb. 12-15, by the U.S.

Navy Civil Engineering Corps Officer's School Mobile Training Team. The Refresher Course will take place Feb. 12. The Introduction Course will be conducted Feb. 13-15. Commanders and directors are requested to submit

nominations for the course to the head of Natural Resources and Environmental Affairs Division (Attn: Comprehensive Environmental Training Education Program Coordinator) no later than Dec. 22. Nominees may be officers, enlisted or civilian personnel who are appointed to serve as Environmental Compliance Coordinators or HM/HW officers, or coordinators within their unit or organization. Nominations shall include the name, rank, social security number, e-

mail address, and telephone number of the nominee. Also provide the name of the nominee's immediate supervisor.

Notification of selection or non-selection will be made no later than Dec. 29.

Completion of this course, combined with requisite locally tailored hazard communication and procedures training, will satisfy military occupational specialty 9954 training requirements. The NREA point of contact for additional information is Mr. Scott Kerr at 830-8480.

Major infrastructure repairs underway at MCAGCC

LT. CMNDR. KEVIN NORTON

There have been a number of recent road closures due to major sewer main repair work, as well as several road repaving projects. These projects are being completed by the Facilities Management Division and Resident Officer-in-Charge of Construction team. All work is very much needed to repair critical base infrastructure over the next several months. Please heed all traffic control signs.

The Fiscal Year 2006 Marine Corps supplemental funding, which is used to fund major projects and is usually released early in the fiscal year, was not released to the base until July. As a result, FMD, ROICC and the Comptroller had to award a very large number of construction contracts in August and September. Four of these contracts are major paving projects on Mainside, and two are major sewer main repair projects that will require road closures on Mainside and in the family housing areas.

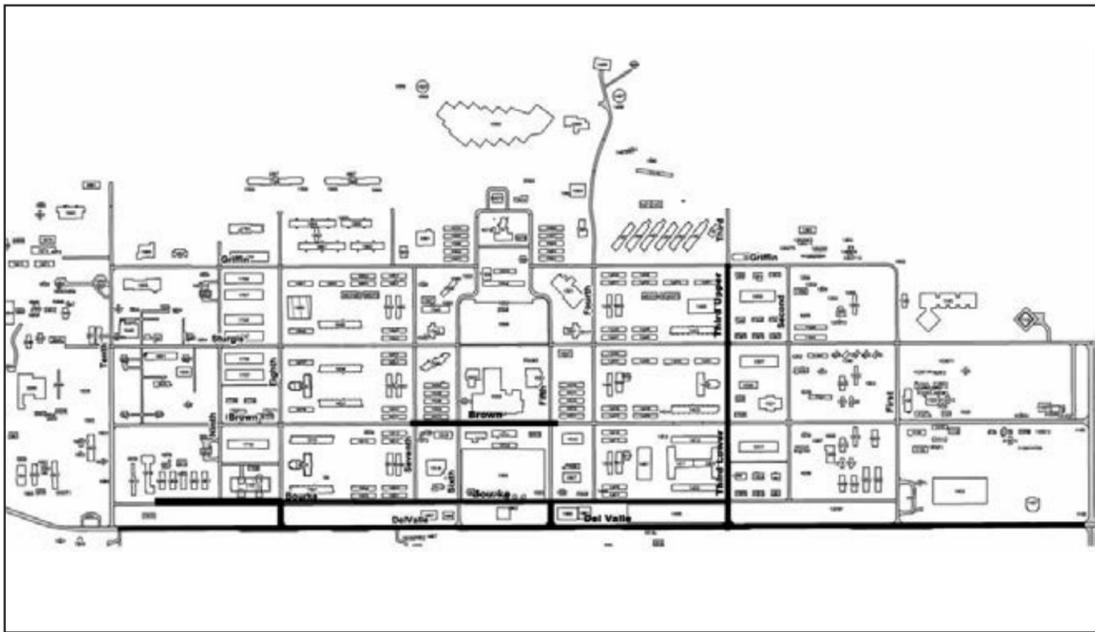
The paving projects are being phased as much as possible to minimize inconvenience. The first major repaving job has already begun on Bourke Road and the lower section of Third

Street, and this is expected to be complete by early January. Del Valle Road will be repaved from approximately February to May. Traffic will be diverted from Del Valle Road to Bourke Road during construction.

The upper section of Third Street between Brown and Griffin Road will be repaved between January and February. Brown Road between Fifth and Seventh Streets will also be repaved between January and February.

In addition, there are a number of road closures associated with sewer main repairs throughout Mainside and the family housing areas. Mainside sewer repairs have begun, and major efforts are already underway in the Shadow Mountain housing area. Sewer repair work will be accomplished in Ocotillo housing, with minimal impact to the residents, between January and May. Sewer repair work in the Adobe Flats I housing area will begin sometime in the Spring after the Public/Private Venture housing renovations are completed.

Additional information will be put out in Speedcall and a letter to the family housing residents as the construction schedules firm up. Please contact ROICC at 830-7402 if you have schedule concerns.



This is a map of road construction projects currently underway aboard the Combat Center.

Road Construction Project Schedule

Bourke	Dec. 4 - Jan. 5
Third (Upper)	Jan 8 - Feb 9
Third (Lower)	Jan 8 - Feb 9
Brown	Jan. 18 - Feb 19
Del Valle	Jan. 31 - May 4

Alcohol treatment: a sobering thought

LANCE CPL. KATELYN A. KNAUER

COMBAT CORRESPONDENT

The night starts off well; you and your buddies are having a beer or two, watching a football game, playing poker or just hanging out. Then one or two beers lead to three, then four, then five, and so on, until you lose count. It is starting to seem as though you are the only one getting wasted every single night by yourself, but your "friends" still cheer you on as you do a keg stand. Do you think it might be a problem when your drinking leads to a nasty hangover the next morning, only to be followed by another night of drinking?

Alcoholism is a primary chronic disease with genetic psychosocial and environmental factors influencing its development and manifestations. It is characterized by continuous or periodic: impaired control over drinking, preoccupation with the drug alcohol, use of alcohol despite adverse consequences, and distortions in thinking, most notably denial, according to The American Society of Addiction Medicine Incorporation Web site.

It's never too late to get help, and the Combat Center Substance Abuse Counseling Center is here to help Marines, sailors, dependents, retirees and civil service employees who are struggling with substance abuse.

"Anyone who thinks they are having a problem can self

refer themselves for a substance abuse program," said Dr. Stephen Mann, program manger. "They can self refer by going to the command's Substance Abuse Control Officer. It is better to go early when you know you have a problem rather than risk getting involved in an alcohol related incident."

Alcohol related incidents may send a Marine or sailor to one of the numerous programs offered on base including underage drinking, driving under the influence, being involved with domestic disputes while intoxicated, and even getting injured while intoxicated and needing to receive medical care.

Any Marine who has a self referral or is referred by their command will receive screening, assessment and treatment from one of the several substance abuse programs offered on base or is sent to an in-patient treatment facility. The levels of treatment are determined by The American Society of Addiction Medicine Incorporation.

The first level of treatment is a 6 hour Marine Alcohol Awareness Class, followed by a two-day, eight-hour IMPACT class on alcohol information. After the first two levels, it increases to a three-week, half-day outpatient program. Then it moves to an intensive outpatient program, which is a four-week, half-day program. The last program is a 30-day intensive



LANCE CPL. KATELYN A. KNAUER

Examine your habits. If you're drinking a noticeable percentage of your paycheck, it may be time to seek advice on how to cut back or quit.

Substance Abuse and rehabilitation Program at an inpatient facility at Point Loma Naval Base.

The first two levels are for individuals who have misused alcohol without a pattern of

abuse. The outpatient services are generally for individuals who demonstrate a pattern of abuse. The intensive outpatient services are for individuals who are alcohol dependent.

"Marines who receive

inpatient care also receive TAD [temporary additional duties] orders," said Mann. "We're here to make sure Marines and sailors are fit for duty and can return to help with the mission. Ninety-nine

percent of the time, we see a positive change."

If you or someone you know has a problem, contact the Combat Center Substance Abuse Counseling Center at 760-830-6376.

BLACKJACK from A1

"It's not just a beverage," continued Molinanauro. "It's a very addictive drug. If you don't get help or treatment early on, it could lead to a deadly situation."

Matthews explained in his brief why addicts like himself don't always have the strength to get their own help.

"The dilemma of an alcoholic is wanting to quit, but not being able to make it through the day without having a drink," said Matthews. "One drink is too many and a hundred drinks are not enough."

It has been 22 years now since Matthews has had a drop of alcohol to drink thanks to his commitment to the 12-step program. He said his goals were accomplished by avoiding what he calls "slippery places," or situations that tempt him to drink. He still attends meetings three times a week in Oregon to keep his goals in-sight and his motivation at a stable level.

Matthews said that if every one could take one thing from his brief, he hopes they will keep in mind what it means to be a Marine.

"Being a Marine is all about looking after each other," said Matthews. "Marines don't let other Marines or friends get behind a wheel or on a bike if they've been drinking."

Matthews advises anyone who thinks they may have an alcohol dependency problem to get help early.

"If you know you are hurting or you have a problem, don't hesitate to reach out for help," said Matthews. "Don't try to take on the pain by yourself."

C.O.P. Corner

Community

Oriented Policing

The proactive voice of crime prevention



Presented by the Provost Marshal's Office Crime Prevention Section

Drinking and driving can cost you

With New Years and Christmas right around the corner, service members can look forward to an upcoming 96-hour liberty period. Some people may choose to stay at home and spend quality time with family, while others may choose to go drink to have a good time.

With drinking comes a lot of responsibility, such as obeying the legal drinking age of 21 and not letting anyone underage drink, as well as not drinking and driving. Drinking and driving can cost you a lot of money, you can cause injury to yourself or others, waste time, and possibly end your career.

Did you know the penalties for DUI or DWI in California (Maximum), are:
 1st offense = 6 months in jail, \$1,000 fine and license suspended for 120 days.
 2nd offense = 1 year in jail, \$1,000 fine and license suspended for 1 year.
 3rd offense = 1 year in jail, \$1,000 fine and license suspended for 3 years.

These are just the punishments; you will also have many other expenses to pay for.

Vehicle towing	\$150
Storage	\$50 per day
Booking, fingerprinting, and photo fee	\$156
Driver license reinstatement fee	\$125
Car insurance increase	
(3-year mandatory insurance requirements)	\$1,000 per year
1st offense DUI fine	\$1,588
Assessment for the court system	\$816
Community service fee	\$150
DUI victims fund	\$100
Alcohol abuse education fund	\$50
DUI classes	\$550
DUI Victims' Impact sessions	\$20
Time payment charge	\$35
Public transportation for one year	\$500 to \$800

Minimum total fees, fines, and assessments \$8,240*

* If you use an attorney, the initial consultation could range from \$750 to \$1,000

After these charges, you will also be subject to punishment under the UCMJ, which may include loss of pay or pay grade. Be smart and don't drink and drive.

For more information go to Web site <http://www.dmv.ca> or <http://www.dui-help.com>.

Presented by the Provost Marshal's Office Crime Prevention Section

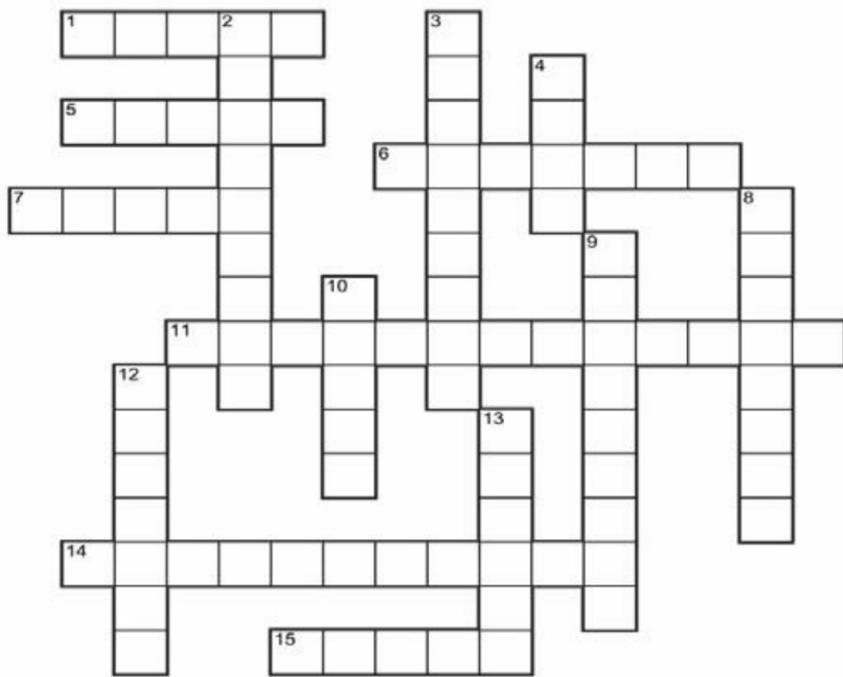
The following services are available to on-base personnel and residents through Crime Prevention: literature, briefs, education, crime assessments, safety tips, the Stranger Danger program, McGruff the Crime Dog, the Officer Friendly program, the Property Marking program, and the Child Identification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

Sempertoons

By Gunnery Sgt. Charles Wolf



SUPERHEROES



ACROSS

- A combination of lightning and chemicals transformed Wally West into The _____, the fastest man alive.
- Batman's sidekick.
- A demon, raised from infancy after being conjured by and rescued from the Nazis, grows up to become a defender against the forces of darkness.
- She's born with the mutant ability to absorb the powers of those she comes into skin contact with.
- "Go planet!"
- She is one of the first female superheroes and arguably the most famous.
- Born in darkness. Sworn to justice.

DOWN

- Peter woke up after getting bit by a spider and his vision becomes blurred.
- "The Man Without Fear," "The Scarlet Swashbuckler," Mathew Murdock.
- The Incredible _____. He's green.
- "It's a bird. It's a plane. It's _____."
- This mutant heals quickly, possesses animal-like senses and reflexes and has three forearm-length claws on each hand.
- Stormy Weather is a very clear parody of the X-Men's.
- Scott Summers has a dangerous eye
- Bruce Wayne's name at night.

[Solutions on A9]

Centerspeak

What do you think about the concept of Functional Fitness?

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



SSGT. BROCK SCHULTZ
MCCES C Co.



SGT. RAYMOND J. BURTON
2/7 COMM.



HN KODY WATKINS
2/7 G Co.

"I agree with the MOS' PT-ing more in line with their skill set, i.e. 03's practicing more MCMAP, but for us I don't know if I'd change anything."

"I think PT should go along with the MOS. I think that's a good thing. Like Wiremen — what they can do is carry their spool of wire while they run. Or Radiomen can hump with the radio to make them stronger."

(When asked about the concept's "active recovery" approach to injuries)

"When a Marine or sailor comes in with a sprained ankle and it's all swollen, there are exercises you can do instead of just sitting around. You can do exercises with a rubber band to strengthen the ligaments instead of sitting around while the rest of the platoon PTs."

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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3/4 Marines combine holiday spirit, esprit de corps in northwestern Iraq

CPL. MICHAEL S. CIFUENTES

3RD BATTALION, 4TH MARINE REGIMENT

AL QA'IM, Iraq – Tis' the first week of December and Americans have already begun stirring up the holiday spirits – even in Iraq.

U.S. Marines and sailors with 3rd Battalion, 4th Marine Regiment, a southern Calif.-based battalion, didn't have to dig deep for memories of sipping egg nog, decorating pine trees and listening to "Jingle Bell Rock."

Not only did the Marines bring their military gear to Iraq, but also their holiday season memories that they've accrued since childhood. They've recently been decking their living space with holiday morale boosters - decorations and good holiday spirit.

The battalion has operated in the northwestern region of Iraq's Al Anbar Province, just miles shy from the Iraq-Syria border, since arriving here in September.

Daily life for these Marines means patrolling dangerous streets through Euphrates River cities in this region of about 125,000 people. Risking their lives alongside Iraqi Security Forces, the Marines are in search of improvised explosive devices, insurgents and weapons caches.

But it's December, and Christmas is just around the corner. Some Marines are taking time to send holiday cards back home to family

and friends. Others are busy opening countless care packages and presents they're receiving in the mail.

Lance Cpl. Scott C. Creen, a 20-year-old Marine from Chisago City, Minn., says he's sending Christmas cards to his family and friends state-side "just to remind them that there is Christmas in Iraq."

"I am sort of sending my family and some of my friends my 'season's greetings,' because I won't be there to celebrate the holidays with them," said Creen, who drives a humvee during daily patrols in Iraq.

"Most importantly, I am writing to them – my mom, the guys [friends] and the lovely gal [his girlfriend] – to tell them I miss them, and I will be missing them especially during this month," he said.

Regardless of the daily patrols and long work hours, the Marines here say they are making time to celebrate the holidays. After all, December is the one time of the year they get to take part in holiday festivities they've celebrated since they were children.

"Egg nog by the fire and 'the Nutcracker' is what I am missing out on," said Creen. "I'd either be doing something like that right now or snowboarding."

Inside the living quarters of a U.S. Marine outpost in Al Ubaydi – one of dozens of small towns just miles east of the Iraq-Syria border –



Holiday decorations and a Christmas stocking hang inside the living quarters of Marines with Company I, 3rd Battalion, 4th Marine Regiment in Al Ubaydi, Iraq.

Marines and sailors put up Christmas lights, garlands of tinsel and other winter seasonal ornaments. Stockings and boot socks hang from makeshift fireplaces made out of the same plywood they use to make their furniture.

"Our place is starting to look like home," said Cpl. Joshua V. Pfaff, a St. Charles, Mo., native, describing the holiday decorations the Marines put up in their living quarters.

Still, holiday decorations are no substitute for the real thing back home, he says.

"Sometimes I wake up in the middle of the night. It's dark but I see my Christmas lights and think that I am home," said Pfaff. "But, a few seconds later, I realize I'm in Iraq."

Nonetheless, Pfaff and the Marines that live with him have the Christmas spirit, he said. Even though it is tough being away from home during these times, he said he's glad that he can celebrate the season's holidays with his buddies

here – a new "home away from home."

For the battalion's India Company, which is based at one of many of the Marines' remote forward battle positions along the Euphrates River here, the Marines face such threats as small-arms fire and IEDs. They're getting better at spotting IEDs – bombs emplaced by insurgents to attack Coalition and Iraqi forces – and are finding many of the hidden explosives before they go off. The Marines are also capturing more and more insurgents, which means less "bad guys" on the streets.

The Marines also mentor Iraqi police and soldiers, who they share their outpost with, imparting them with vital military tactics and procedures so they can maintain security in Iraq on their own.

When they're not "outside

the wire," some of the Marines are preparing for the holidays – setting up ornaments, writing cards and watching movies like "The Christmas Story," is a good way to break the monotony of everyday operations here, said Pfaff, who is spending his first Christmas away from home.

"If I were at home, I'd probably be helping my mom decorate the tree," said Lance Cpl. Raul Bravo, a Las Vegas native. "I'm still keeping the same spirit here though, I just don't have to worry about breaking those \$50 ornaments my mom gets."

The Marines receive the ornaments in care packages sent from family members and friends. The amount of incoming care packages has increased greatly since the week of Thanksgiving, said Lance Cpl. Blair Evans, a

Holiday, Utah, native, and the battalion's mail clerk.

"We've been getting loads and loads of boxes this week, and we're expecting so much more this month," said Evans, who says he has already sorted through several tons of packages since Thanksgiving.

When the Marines pick up their mail and find a stack of boxes awaiting them, "Wow!" is usually the first word out of their mouths, said Evans.

"These packages keep the Marines smiling," added Evans. "When they come to pick up their mail and see that their section has boxes stacked, they go nuts."

The end of the holiday season means the battalion has surpassed the halfway point of the deployment. Even though combat operations won't cease for any holiday, the Marines here say they hope for silent nights.



Lance Cpl. Raul Bravo and Cpl. Joshua V. Pfaff set up Christmas lights in their living quarters inside a Marine outpost Dec. 1, in Al Ubaydi, Iraq.

**MARINE CORPS COMMUNITY SERVICES
HOLIDAY HOURS OF OPERATION & CLOSURES 2006**

All **MCCS ADMINISTRATIVE OFFICES** will be closed Dec. 25 and Jan 1. Otherwise, regular hours are in effect.

All MCCS Activities will be **CLOSED CHRISTMAS EVE, SUNDAY, DEC 24, 2006 EXCEPT:**

Facility	Hours	Facility	Hours
5 th Street Zone	11 AM-10 PM	Main 7-Day Store	7 AM-9 PM
Barber Shop – Main	10 AM-4 PM	Main Exchange	10 AM-6 PM
Carl's Jr	6 AM-12 AM	Marine Palms	9 AM-5 PM
Desert Winds Golf Course	6 AM-8 PM	MCC/Cybercade	11 AM-8 PM
Duffer's Retreat	6:30 AM-2 PM	Quick Break Sandwich	10 AM-5 PM
East Gym	8 AM-6 PM	Rice King	12 PM-5 PM
Finance Center	10 AM-6 PM	Sandy Hills Bowling Ctr	12 PM-12 AM
Gas Station	8:30 AM-4 PM Credit Cards 24 hrs	Softland Video	10 AM-4 PM
Home Store	10 AM-6 PM	Subway	6 AM-8 PM
Jasmine Espresso Cafe	8 AM-4 PM	Sunset Cinema	2 PM, 6 PM, 9 PM
Lifelong Learning Library	10 AM-6 PM	Taco Bell	12 PM-10 PM

All MCCS Activities will be **CLOSED CHRISTMAS DAY, MONDAY, DEC 25, 2006, EXCEPT:**

Facility	Hours	Facility	Hours
5 th Street Zone	12 PM-10 PM	Marine Palms Exchange	9 AM-3 PM
East Gym	8 AM-6 PM	Sunset Cinema	6 PM, 9 PM

All MCCS Activities will be **CLOSED NEW YEARS EVE, SUNDAY, DEC 31, 2006 EXCEPT:**

Facility	Hours	Facility	Hours
5 th Street Zone	10 AM-10 PM	Main Exchange	10 AM-6 PM
Auto Skills	10 AM-6 PM	Main Seven Day	7 AM-11 PM
Carl's Jr.	6 AM-12 AM	Marine Palms	9 AM-9 PM
Desert Winds Golf Course	6 AM-8 PM	MCC/Cybercade	11 AM-8 PM
Duffer's Retreat	6:30 AM-2 PM	Quick Break Sandwiches	10 AM-5 PM
East Gym	8 AM-6 PM	Rice King	11 PM-5 PM
Finance Center	10 AM-6 PM	Sandy Hills Bowling Ctr	12 PM-12 AM
Home Store	10 AM-6 PM	Sunset Cinema	2 PM, 6 PM, 9 PM
Jasmine Espresso Cafe	8 AM-4 PM	Video Rental	10 AM-10 PM
Lifelong Learning Library	10 AM-6 PM	Taco Bell	10 PM-10 PM

All MCCS Activities will be **CLOSED NEW YEARS DAY, MONDAY, 1 JAN 2007 EXCEPT:**

Facility	Hours	Facility	Hours
5 th Street Zone	10 AM-10 PM	Main 7-Day Store	7 AM-11 PM
Carl's Jr	8 AM-Midnight	Subway	6 AM-7 PM
Desert Winds Golf Course	6 AM-2 PM	Sunset Cinema	6 PM, 9 PM
Duffer's Retreat	6:30 AM-2 PM	Taco Bell	10 AM-10 PM
East Gym	8 AM-6 PM		



SOLUTIONS

Getting to know the threat

Role player Manuel Blanco sights down the barrel of an AK-47 during a Mojave Viper training exercise at Range 215 Tuesday. Role players play the part of Iraqi citizens and insurgents in the urban warfare portion of Mojave Viper.



PHOTO BY CPL. GEORGE HRUBY

FITNESS from A1

The current Marine Corps physical fitness program does not adequately prepare Marines for combat, over-emphasizing aerobic training and pays little attention to strength training, according to the document. This type of conditioning doesn't build "general physical preparedness," a term used in the program concept to describe a balance in overall physical fitness. Combat demands core strength, endurance, speed and coordination, according to the document.

Marines are required to take a physical fitness test twice a year that includes a 3-mile run, crunches and pull-ups, or for females, the flexed-arm hang. Although Marine Corps Order 6100.12 states that units should not be training for those three events alone, and that their physical conditioning program should consist of combat conditioning, health,



LANCE CPL. REGINA N. ORTIZ

Marines taking part in the Marine Corps Martial Arts Program conduct exercises with kettle bell weights, demonstrate a similar concept with the envisioned functional fitness program.

fitness and unit cohesion, many Marines focus on the PFT's requirements only. This creates an imbalance in the Marine's physical fitness, according to the concept.

Included in this concept is the idea of "specific physical preparedness," a term used to describe the preparation of a

Marine in his or her military occupational specialty or individual mission. It guides commanders to physically train Marines in their specific task in an overall mission.

The concept also envisions a change in the way injuries are prevented and cared for. By strengthening the muscles

and joints and increasing bone density through exercises, injuries can be avoided when put under the physical stress and demands of combat. The foreseen functional fitness program will have an educational aspect of biomechanics and how to avoid injuries by using proper techniques in various exercises.

The program aims to shorten the extent of passive recovery, when a Marine refrains from any type of physical activity due to an injury, and speed forward to active recovery, where a Marine can continue training, working around the injury. Recovery from an injury should be a time when new physical skills are learned. The Marine will heal faster and be stronger in the long run, according to the concept.

The concept of a functional fitness program includes other tests, along with the standard PFT to test baseline fitness. Commanders are guided to develop physical training tests

to learn how effective their own fitness program is.

The program concept also involves units to assign fitness coordinators throughout their sections to be a specialist in the program and fitness in general. Experienced noncommissioned officers and staff noncommissioned officers will be called on to receive specialized training in the program at a training center to be a commander's principal advisor on functional fitness, according to the document.

This is a concept aimed to provide physical training more relevant to what today's units experience in combat. The program has not been made the official fitness guidance, but released by Headquarters Marine Corps Combat Development and Integration to present a new concept on fitness.

For more information on the Concept of Functional Fitness, log on to their Web site, <http://www.mcwl.usmc.mil/concepts/home.cfm>.

Protecting Against Identity Theft During the Holidays

STEVEN B. SMITH

IN2M CORPORATION

With consumers planning to spend more than \$457 billion this holiday season (almost \$800 each), according to the National Retail Federation, retailers are hoping to reap the financial rewards. Unfortunately, so are identity thieves.

As the amount of money we spend and the number of times we spend increases at this time of year, so too does the window of opportunity for would-be thieves. The increase in transactions not only means that thieves have more chances to steal your information, but they also have an easier time burying fraudulent transactions among all those legitimate transactions as well. If you are not careful, it can take months to discover the problem, and even longer to sort it all out.

Here are five tips to help keep yourself safe this holiday season:

1) Select your card wisely. If you are like most people, you will pull out the plastic to make most of your holiday purchases this year.

Two out of every three people will rely on either a credit card or debit card as their primary method of payment, according to the National Retail Federation. But which type of card you choose can make a huge difference. Credit cards, with their temptation to spend money that you don't have, and their infamously high interest rates, are definite-

ly the biggest danger for some. But if you have the discipline to avoid overspending, credit cards usually provide the best protection against fraud and theft with less liability in case your information does get stolen. Increasingly popular rewards programs can also stretch your holiday budget when used correctly.

2) Protect your paper documents. While there has been much media attention to phishing, spyware, hackers and other forms of online fraud, the fact remains that 90% of cases where the method of obtaining the stolen information is known involve traditional 'offline' methods like 'dumpster diving' for receipts and bank statements or lost or stolen wallets. Over 50% of cases are 'friendly fraud' involving a family member, friend or other trusted associate, according to a study by Javelin Strategy and Research along with the Better Business Bureau.

3) Monitor your accounts online. Regular monitoring of all transactions can help catch fraudulent activity and reduce losses.

According to the study by Javelin Strategy and Research, self detection by the victim results in 35% shorter detection times and 36% lower consumer costs. A household budgeting program www.mvelopes.com, like Mvelopes Personal, automatically pulls all your transactions from different accounts into one program

to make monitoring them simple and quick.

4) Choose your Web sites carefully. The Web can be a valuable tool, saving time and money as you avoid the crowds and can compare prices at multiple retailers, but you still need to exercise caution in how you shop online. Never click on links provided in e-mails, even if they look official. "Phishing" artists will send out e-mails that look like they are from reputable companies, but the links take you to imposter sites used to steal your information. Reputable companies will never send an e-mail asking you to enter your sensitive account or identification information. It's usually safest to stick to larger, more well-known companies, and type in the URL on your own. When using less known companies, check for the "https" beginning on a Web site instead of the regular "http" and look for the padlock icon. Icons like the VeriSign logo, or the Hacker Safe logo ensure that the site meets certain data security requirements. Also, check to see if the company is a member of the Better Business Bureau Online Reliability Program and if they are Visa CISP (Cardholder Information Security Program) compliant.

5) Check your credit report in January. One of the most costly methods of identity theft, and one of the most difficult to detect is a new account opened using your social security number or personal information. You are entitled to a free copy of your credit report once a year from each of the three credit reporting agencies.

You can obtain a copy of your report by going to www.annualcreditreport.com. By staggering the reports from each of the three agencies throughout the year, you can keep an eye on your credit throughout the year. If you suspect any fraudulent activity, call the account provider immediately to freeze or close the account. Visit

www.consumer.gov/idtheft for more information on steps to take if you suspect you are the victim of identity theft.

With a little caution this holiday season, you can rest assured that your identity will remain yours, and yours alone.

And you're going to need all the rest you can get after fighting those crowds at the mall.

SPORT SHORTS

YOUTH BASKETBALL
REGISTRATION
DEADLINE

Youth Sports is offering basketball for ages 4 to 14. The cost is \$30 and includes a uniform and award. Register from now until Wednesday, or until the program is filled. You can register at the Community Center, building 1004. For further information call 830-8421 or 830-3910.

YOUTH START SMART
BASKETBALL
REGISTRATION
DEADLINE

Youth Sports is offering Start Smart Basketball for children ages 3 to 5. Participants learn entry-level skills and techniques needed to play basketball properly. The cost is \$15 and includes a t-shirt, parent manual and an award. You can register at the Community Center, Building 1004. Registration ends Wednesday, or until the program is full. For more information call 830-3910 or 830-8421.

LEISURE

AMERICAN RED
CROSS DENTAL

ASSISTANT PROGRAM

The American Red Cross Dental Assistant Program will begin accepting applications today. The next class will begin Jan. 29. The Dental Assistant Program consists of 750 hours of classroom and clinical experience. Upon completion of the program students will receive a certificate in basic dental assisting. For More information call the American Red Cross at 830-6685

LINCOLN MILITARY
HOUSING WILL BE
VISITED BY SANTA

Lincoln Military Housing will be visited by Santa and his elves tomorrow from 10 a.m. to 2 p.m., at the Housing Office. Families are invited to come by and have your child's picture taken for free, and to tell Santa what they want for Christmas. Refreshments will be provided. If you have any questions, please contact the Housing Office at 368-4500.

DESERT WINDS GOLF
COURSE FAMILY
HAYRIDES

Desert Winds Golf Course will have free Family Hayrides around the golf course on Saturday from 5 to 8 p.m. Santa Clause will be attending. Duffer's Snack Bar will be open. Crafts and coloring books will be given to the children. For more information, please call 830-6610.

Did You Know?

Baboons were once trained by Egyptians

to wait tables

Toys for Tots campaign
nears end, still going strong

MCAGCC Commanding General, Brig. Gen. Douglas M. Stone applauds Marine Corps Communication-Electronics School students as they pass by the Officers' Club during the Toys for Tots Run Dec. 8.

LANCE CPL. REGINA N.
ORTIZ

COMBAT CORRESPONDENT

The local Toys for Tots campaign is drawing near the end of their 2006 season, and working hard to ensure a happy holiday for all needy children across

the Morongo Basin.

The students and staff of the Marine Corps Communication-Electronics School gave a hand in the 59-year-old Marine Corps tradition by participating in the school's annual Toys for Tots Run Dec. 8.

More than 1,200 toys were collected as the troops ran by

six trucks, filling their beds one after the other with gifts to local children, said Guntery Sgt. Mario Morones, the Combat Center Toys for Tots coordinator.

When the formation reached the drop-off area, Col. Marshall Considine, MCCES commanding offi-

cer, handed the first toy to Brig. Gen. Douglas M. Stone, the Combat Center's commanding general, who waited with the base sergeant major, Sgt. Maj. William Johnson, alongside Santa Clause and Marines, all in their dress blue uniform, the well-known image of the

Toys for Tots campaign.

The local campaign collects and distributes toys to families across 6,000 square miles, two counties, and more than 15 cities and towns, with a population of more than 500,000 residents.

See TOY FOR TOTS B8



Marines from Company C, 1st LAR, pull a Light Armored Vehicle 150 feet during the Highlander Games at Camp Wilson Saturday.

1st LAR warriors battle it
out in Highlander GamesLANCE CPL. NICOLE A.
LAVINE

COMBAT CORRESPONDENT

Marines and sailors from 1st Light Armored Reconnaissance Battalion participated in a widely-known Celtic event known as the Highlander Games at Camp Wilson Saturday.

The event, which normally includes kilts, bagpipes and Celtic dancers, was celebrated in a more modified style to suit the environment of the Mojave Viper training exercise. Despite the lack of traditional elements, a warrior spirit and sense of competition was still embodied in the men of 1st LAR.

The first event tested the men's ability to drink the fastest. Each Company raided the aluminum trash cans filled with a variety of canned drinks, and drank them as quickly as possible before

holding the empty cans upside-down above their heads. The men of Company C won the event.

The second event tested the battalion's best runners. Eight men from each company were given a 35 ft. length of engineering tape to link them together, and were told to race into the desert and turn around at the marker. The first company to return was Company D, followed by Company C in second place.

The next event was the Light Armored Vehicle pull, where each platoon assigned 20 of their strongest men to pull an LAV 200 meters in the fastest time. This event continued to take place throughout the day because after each platoon completed the event, the LAV needed to be turned around and brought back to the starting line.

The following event was

the tanker bar throw, where individual Marines and sailors chucked a 65 lb. tanker bar as far as they could.

The next event was the 7-ton tire roll, where Marines and sailors divided by platoons, and rolled a 7-ton-truck tire around an orange cone and back to the start line in the quickest time. Company D won this event as well.

The final event, which was not a competition among platoons or companies, but rather individuals, was a ground-fighting competition in a sand ring. By the end of the ground-fighting, Company B was named the winning company. Although there were no designated champions in this event, the competitive edge and hand-to-hand techniques injected the men of the battalion with fierce energy and liveliness.

See HIGHLANDER B8

7th Marine family
members celebrate
the holiday season

Family members of Marines currently deployed with the 7th Marine Regiment open gifts at their Christmas Party Saturday.

LANCE CPL. KATELYN A. KNAUER

COMBAT CORRESPONDENT

The holiday season is a time to come together with family. Therefore, when a loved one is deployed, the reassurance of others in similar situations is comforting.

Family members of Marines and sailors currently deployed with 7th Marine Regiment came together for a day of activities at the Sandy Hill Lanes Bowling Center Saturday.

The morning started off with fresh pancakes, muffins and an assortment of breakfast items for the families to enjoy. Along with a hearty breakfast, the families were also allowed to bowl for free.

"It helps to see other wives and see how everyone else is dealing with the deployment," said Tammy Jackson, wife of Master Sgt. Robert Jackson. "We got married January 10th of last year and he left on the 27th so I can't wait to see him when he gets back. I have all teenagers, and we are waiting to have Christmas when he gets back."

Marines who are deployed with 7th Marine Regiment are expected to return early next year. Key volunteers hold several events like barbecues, sign making events and other family activities to keep morale high while their loved ones are gone.

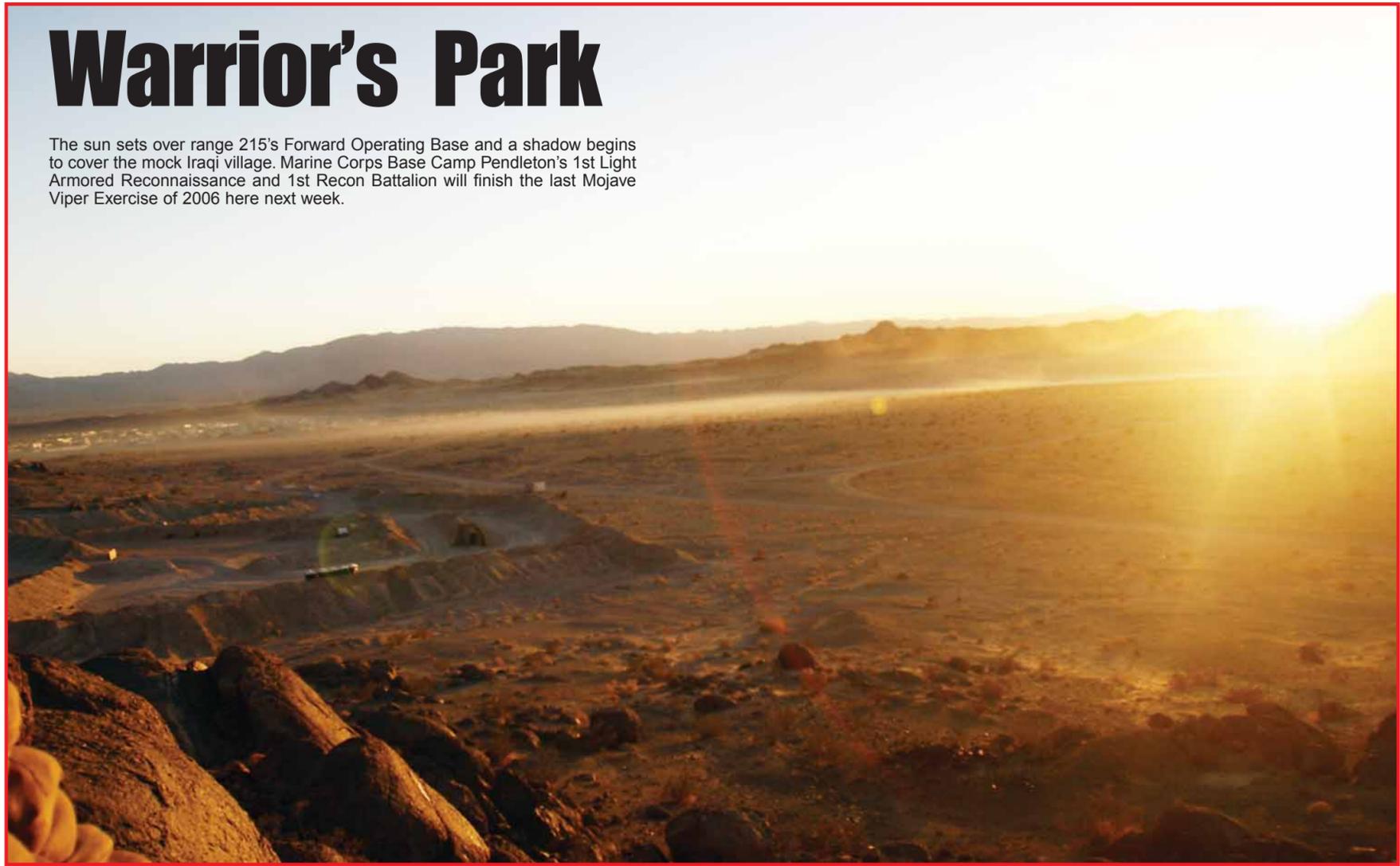
Jennifer Garcia, wife of Cpl. Carlos Garcia, brought her three daughters to the event.

"Events like this are fun for the kids," said Garcia. "It helps them to have something fun to do while their dad is away."

The event also featured Santa Clause, who brought gifts for all the boys and girls who attended. Families who gifted said they are grateful they had others to lean on while their own loved ones were away and are excited for the new year to come when they may reunite with their loved ones.

Warrior's Park

The sun sets over range 215's Forward Operating Base and a shadow begins to cover the mock Iraqi village. Marine Corps Base Camp Pendleton's 1st Light Armored Reconnaissance and 1st Recon Battalion will finish the last Mojave Viper Exercise of 2006 here next week.



Combat Center brings Christmas cheer to families

LANCE CPL. NICOLE A. LAVINE
COMBAT CORRESPONDENT

Religious ministries aboard the Combat Center hosted the annual Christmas Festival at Victory Field Saturday.

The festival provided free food and drinks, live music, gift hand-outs to Marines and their families, and entertainment for all who attended. There were two Jupiter Jumpers set up for the kids, as well as goodie bags filled with candies and toys.

Around noon, a Christian band called

“In His Name” played their opening song as Santa rolled onto the field in a fire truck and greeted the thrilled children. Santa then took pictures with the kids and their families.

Other live music was provided by Dennis Agajanian, a country-style Christian singer.

The gates to the festival were opened to the public at 2 p.m. so they could join the service members and share their gratitude.

The Christmas Festival was a chance for families and single Marines alike to come together and celebrate Christmas.



Cpl. Chris Forkner plays euphonium at the annual Christmas Festival at Victory Field Saturday.

LANCE CPL. NICOLE A. LAVINE



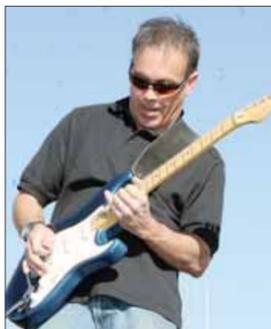
Santa Clause greets enthusiastic children after stepping off a fire truck.

LANCE CPL. NICOLE A. LAVINE



Angelica Oliver creates balloon figures for children at the Christmas Festival Saturday.

LANCE CPL. NICOLE A. LAVINE



Mike Oliver, guitarist for the Christian band “In His Name” plays for the crowd during the Christmas Festival at Victory field Saturday.

LANCE CPL. NICOLE A. LAVINE

TOYS FOR TOTS from B1

Last year, the campaign collected more than 33,500 toys and 24,000 children received toys from Toys for Tots, according to the 2005 after-action report.

The campaign is well on their way to a successful season. Committee members took part in two major toy purchases last week, spending more than \$18,000 at the Yucca Valley Wal-Mart and more than \$8,000 at the Marine Corps Exchange from the Marine Corps Community Services' Santa Silvers program. The campaign also received \$5,000 from the American Friends of our Armed Forces to spend at the Exchange, specifically for toys for military families, said Morones.

Military members are urged to receive toys from Toys for Tots as an appreciation for their service. All military members are eligible to receive toys for their children. Military members can call 830-6861 or 830-7672 for more information.

The Toys for Tots Hotline was closed to applications Tuesday, but will be open until Dec. 21 for any questions or information on the program.

The first toy distribution was Thursday at the Yucca Valley Community Center and the Twentynine Palms toy distribution is scheduled to take place Dec. 21 at the Twentynine Palms Community Center, 74325 Joe Davis Street. For those families who missed the application deadline and are in need of toys, there will be an opportunity to receive toys at the distribution sites at 1 p.m., said Morones.

The program was developed to inspire young children to grow into "responsible, productive, patriotic citizens and community leaders," according to a press release published by Headquarters Marine Corps. With this mind, the program and its volunteers aim for record breaking success and reach for as many needy children as possible.

For more information regarding the Mojave Desert Toys for Tots campaigns visit the Web site <http://www.29palms.usmc.mil/tft/>.



LANCE CPL. REGINA N. ORTIZ

Pvt. Robert Delaune unloads toys collected from the Toys for Tots run at the Toys for Tots warehouse.



LANCE CPL. NICOLE A. LAVINE

Marines from 1st LAR compete for fastest-drinking company during the Highlander Games at Camp Wilson Saturday.



LANCE CPL. NICOLE A. LAVINE

Marines from 1st LAR pose for a photo during the Highlander Games at Camp Wilson Saturday.

HIGHLANDER from B1

Many Marines commented on what the day's events did for the camaraderie and social welfare of the Marines and sailors of 1st LAR, as well as giving a taste of what deployment is like for those who have not been overseas.

Lance Cpl. Mark G. Graham, Company B, said the field exercise was an excellent way of showing the newer Marines how to deal with deployment and how to look after each other on the field.

"This is really good for the pre-deployment aspect," said Graham. "The Marines see camaraderie and get to really know who they are working with."

Lance Cpl. Anthony P. Boones, Company H, focused more on the general concept of having a good

time. "I say this is the best night in the world," said Boones. "You get to meet all the guys from different companies. It brings all the troops together for a great time."

Lt. Com. Greg T. Schluter, battalion Chaplain, felt the same way.

"This is what it's about," said Schluter. "We're a team, a family of brothers."

"This my sixth Marine Corps command, and this is the tightest unit I have ever seen," continued Schluter. "They really take care of each other and they are a good bunch to go to war with."

Although some would assume that getting an entire battalion of Marines together for a contest on strength and efficiency might be a dangerous idea.

However, the men themselves proved that nothing pumps-up morale like a little competition.