

Serving the MCAGCC
Community at
Twentynine Palms, Calif.

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OBSERVATION POST



BULK RATE
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THIS ISSUE

A3 - Thomas Towing

A7 - 1st Recon

B2 - Toys for Tots

HOT TOPICS

SAN BERNARDINO COUNTY SHERIFF'S DEPARTMENT DUI AND SAFETY CHECKPOINT

The San Bernardino County Sheriff's Department will be conducting a DUI and safety checkpoint in the town of Yucca Valley Saturday from 7 p.m. to 3 a.m. This operation is one arm of the countywide "Avoid the 25" program targeting drivers who operate motor vehicles under the influence of alcohol or drugs, or otherwise operate motor vehicles in violation of the law.

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.

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.

COMING NEXT ISSUE

The New Op!

THIS DAY IN MARINE CORPS HISTORY

Dec. 22, 1989

Marines were in the second day of Operation Just Cause in Panama to protect American lives, restore the democratic process, preserve the integrity of the Panama Canal Treaty, and apprehend dictator General Manuel Antonio Noriega.

Marine earns NAM for heroic act

LANCE CPL. LAVINE
COMBAT CORRESPONDENT

A Marine was awarded the Navy and Marine Corps Achievement Medal at Camp Wilson Monday for his actions Nov. 24 at the Camp Wilson Forward Ammunition Supply Point.

It was a normal day at work for Lance Cpl. Michael J. Cole, an ammunition technician assigned to 2nd Supply Battalion based in Camp Lejeune, N.C.

Cole was working in a Field Storage Unit when Marines returned from a supply operation with a humvee.

After the Marines dismounted the humvee, they discovered it was not turning off. It was then Cole noticed smoke coming from the battery under the front passenger's seat. He and a couple other Marines pulled the seat away to find an electrical fire caused by a short in the battery.

"Every one else decided to run out when they saw the fire," said Cole. He and one other Marine, Pfc. Clifton R. Jameson, stayed behind to take control of the situation.

Jameson retrieved a fire extinguisher and gave it to Cole, who extinguished the fire as sparks emitted from the shorted battery.

At that time, another Marine shout-

ed to Cole that there was another fire under the vehicle. When Cole investigated the underside of the humvee, he found the electrical fire had traveled down the wiring and was almost to the gas tank.

Thinking fast, Cole retrieved another fire extinguisher, which turned out to be inadequate to put out the flames.

What Cole did next gave the reason for his friends and family calling him "crazy." He jumped into the vehicle and drove it out of the FSU, which was filled with millions of dollars of ammunition and at least 1,000 canisters of powder magazines. Cole drove the vehicle 300 yards away, where Pfc. Alex J. Balistreri grabbed a fire extinguisher from the nearest building and gave it to Cole. Cole then put the fire completely out.

Although Cole doesn't talk about it often, those around him are impressed by his actions.

"The guys in the FASP seem even more excited about him getting awarded than he is," said Sgt. Matthew L. Foust, FASP staff noncommissioned officer-in-charge, before the ceremony.

Foust went on to praise Cole's unhesitant seizure of control over the situation.

See NAM A3



LANCE CPL. LAVINE
Maj. Gen. David Bice, the inspector general of the Marine Corps, awards Lance Cpl. Michael Cole the Navy-Marine Corps Achievement Medal Monday at the Forward Ammunition Supply Point.

College honors former Combat Center CG



LANCE CPL. NICOLE A. LAVINE
Mary Lou Reid - with her two sons Rodney and Richard - enjoys the dozen roses given to her by the Copper Mountain College board of directors during a bookstore dedication and groundbreaking ceremony Wednesday in honor of her late husband, Brig. Gen. Ernie R. Reid.

LANCE CPL. NICOLE A.
LAVINE
COMBAT CORRESPONDENT

Copper Mountain Community College hosted a groundbreaking and dedication ceremony to commemorate a new bookstore in honor of retired Brig. Gen. Ernest R. Reid Jr., an influential member of the Twentynine Palms community and former member of the Friends of Copper Mountain College Board of Directors.

The General Ernie Reid Bookstore, named in honor of the former Combat Center commanding general who passed away Dec. 27, 2005, will be approximately 2,100 square ft. and will be located on the south side of the courtyard in the Phase

III area of the campus.

"Marines talk a lot about getting things done on their watch," said Eva Kinsman, president of the Board of Directors. "I am so pleased to build this on my watch and break the ground for General Reid's bookstore."

The bookstore will include office, storage, and retail space, as well as provide support space for the Copper Mountain College Foundation. The foundation, which is responsible for collecting almost \$10 million, helped fund the project, said Barbara Workman, executive director of the CMC Foundation and assistant to the superintendent/president.

See DEDICATION A5

Season's Greetings

Say goodbye to the old Observation Post!

Our next edition will hit the stands Jan. 12 with a new look. That doesn't mean you can't voice your opinion about what you'd like to see inside. Go to www.marcorssyscom.usmc.mil/survey/takesurvey.asp?surveyID=IJ24p4KLM9ILM and let your voice be heard.

Happy Holidays,
From the Observation Post Staff



Thomas Towing helps eliminate drunk driving during holidays

LANCE CPL. REGINA N. ORTIZ

COMBAT CORRESPONDENT

The holidays call for more celebrations and parties, more “Cheers!” and, unfortunately, more drunk drivers on the road.

Thomas Towing in Twentynine Palms is offering military members free towing during the holidays to avoid drunk driving and make for a safe and happy holiday, said John Breuer, a representative for Thomas Towing.

“Nobody likes drinking and driving,” he said. “If you are going to go out and drink, make sure you plan before you leave to have a safe way to get home or have a place to sleep it off.

“For those people that forget to have a plan, we will be helping out with towing so everyone can enjoy the holidays more safely,” he continued.

Normally, to have a car towed, a person pays \$65 dollars for in town or on base, said Breuer.

But, if you’re driving drunk and have a driving under the influence charge, that is just the start of the money that comes out of your pocket.

If apprehended on base, the military police will report driving under the influence violations to the California Department of Motor Vehicles, where they are required to report the incident to the violator’s insurance company. Insurance can be raised 400 percent, if the violator is even able to keep insurance. The offense will affect insurance premiums for three years after the incident, said Capt. James P. Dollard, deputy provost marshal.

First time DUI offenders will face penalties from the county court and the DMV.

In court, the offender is charged a \$1,200 fine, three years probation, three to five days community service, three to six months in first-time offenders’ school and a 90-day license restriction following the DMV’s license suspension for the offense.

The DMV will suspend the license while the violator is awaiting court hearings. After the drunk driver is convicted, the DMV sus-



This holiday season make sure you have a designated driver if you will be drinking. But if you find yourself in a bind, Thomas Towing is offering free tows to service members on a case-by-case basis on Christmas Eve, Christmas and New Year’s Eve. COURTESY PHOTO

pends the license for four months, and then restricts the license for five months following the suspension. A restricted license only allows the driver to drive to and from work. For more on the California DUI law, log on to <http://www.dui.com/states/california/>.

Penalties from PMO are still in effect. A one-year suspension of driving privileges is incurred, as well as punishment under the service member’s command’s discretion, said Dollard.

“In Headquarters Battalion, they are guaranteed to lose rank, up to a half month’s pay

for two months, and possibly restriction to the confines of the base,” said Sgt. Maj. Nicholas Bourikas, HQBN sergeant major. “This does not include DMV fines and fees.”

Marine leaders like Bourikas appreciate what Thomas Towing is doing to help keep Marines out of trouble.

“I think it is a great, sincere gesture from a member of our community in an effort to help out our Marines, and to help combat possible alcohol related incidents or accidents during the holiday season,” said Bourikas.

“This is just one more alternative available other than drinking and driving,” he continued. “If they don’t want to use the towing service, they can utilize the Arrive Alive card, call a friend, or even their chain of command.

“The worst alternative is to think that they can get away with drinking and driving,” Bourikas stated.

Thomas Towing will be offering their service, free of charge to military members during the upcoming holidays. For more information, or to use the service, call 367-7117.

NAM from A1

“His quick thinking and control prevented a potentially devastating disaster,” said Foust. “This is not something you can be trained for. Either you have it, or you don’t.”

Gunnery Sgt. David Hostuttler, FASP officer in-charge, was also impressed with Cole’s initiative and display of ideal leadership standards.

“This is certainly not a daily thing, but it is part of the job,” said Hostuttler. “He extinguished the fire, made sure everyone got out safely, and did exactly what needed to be done.”

Cole was awarded the Navy and Marine Corps Achievement medal by Maj. Gen. David F. Bice, the inspector general of the Marine Corps.

“My family said they were really proud of me,” said Cole. “My mom thought the fire was bigger than it actually was and my dad just called me crazy.”

However modest Cole is about his deeds, his courage and initiative are unmistakably those of a hero.

Secretary of Defense Dr. Robert M. Gates

Dr. Robert M. Gates was sworn in Monday as the 22nd Secretary of Defense. Before entering his present post, Secretary Gates was the President of Texas A&M University, the nation's seventh largest university. Prior to assuming the presidency of Texas A&M on August 1, 2002, he served as Interim Dean of the George Bush School of Government and Public Service at Texas A&M from 1999 to 2001.



Secretary Gates served as Director of Central Intelligence from 1991 until 1993. Secretary Gates is the only career officer in CIA's history to rise from entry-level employee to Director. He served as Deputy Director of Central Intelligence from 1986 until 1989 and as Assistant to the President and Deputy National Security Adviser at the White House from January 20, 1989, until November 6, 1991, for President George H.W. Bush.

Secretary Gates joined the Central Intelligence Agency in 1966 and spent nearly 27 years as an intelligence professional, serving six presidents. During that period, he spent nearly nine years at the National Security Council, The White House, serving four presidents of both political parties.

Secretary Gates has been awarded the National Security Medal, the Presidential Citizens Medal, has twice received the National Intelligence Distinguished Service Medal, and has three times received CIA's highest award, the Distinguished Intelligence Medal.

He is the author of the memoir, "From the Shadows: The Ultimate Insider's Story of Five Presidents and How They Won the Cold War," published in 1996.

Until becoming Secretary of Defense, Dr. Gates

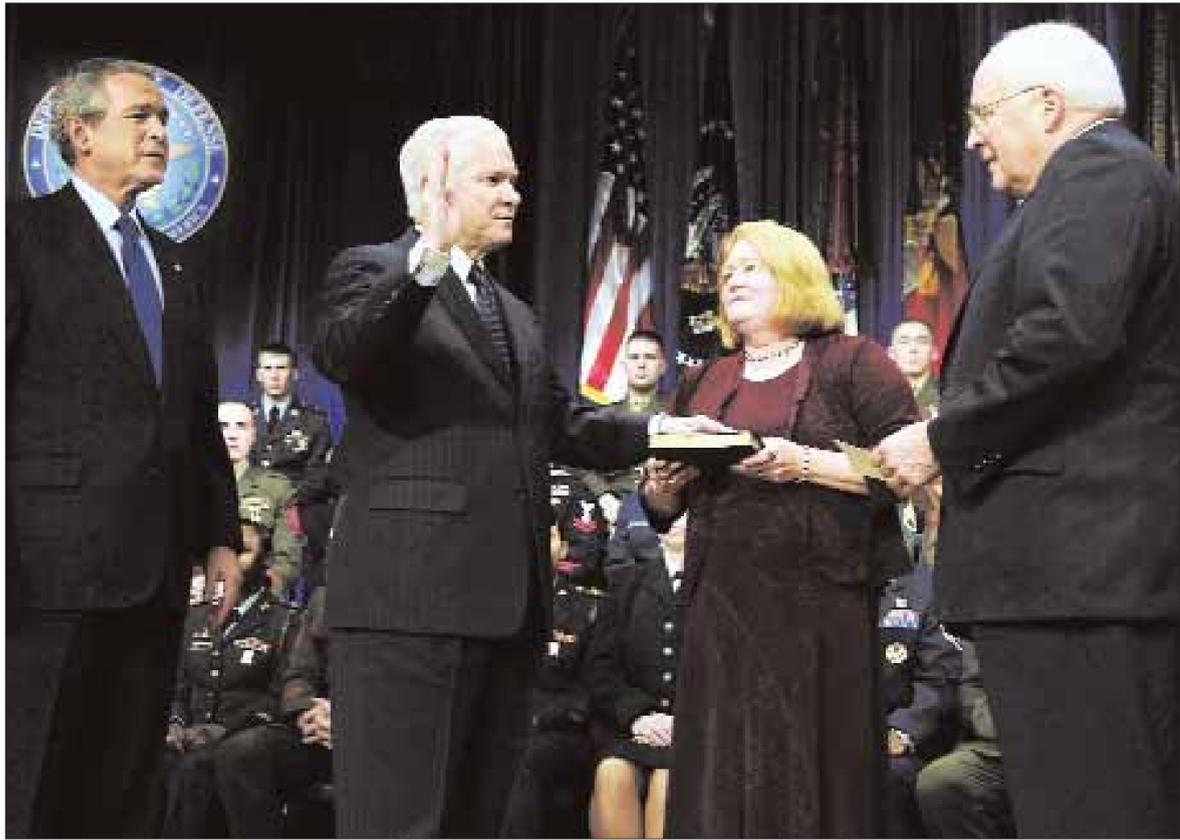
served as Chairman of the Independent Trustees of The Fidelity Funds, the nation's largest mutual fund company, and on the board of directors of NACCO Industries, Inc., Brinker International, Inc. and Parker Drilling Company, Inc.

Dr. Gates has also served on the Board of Directors and Executive Committee of the American Council on Education, the Board of Directors of the National Association of State Universities and Land-Grant Colleges, and the National Executive Board of the Boy Scouts of America. He has also been President of the National Eagle Scout Association.

A native of Kansas, Secretary Gates received his bachelor's degree from the College of William and Mary, his master's degree in history from Indiana University, and his doctorate in Russian and Soviet history from Georgetown University. Dr. Gates is 63, and he and his wife Becky have two adult children.



Gates Sworn In as Defense Secretary, replaces Rumsfeld



Robert M. Gates is sworn in as the 22nd secretary of defense by Vice President Richard B. Cheney at the Pentagon Monday. Gates' wife, Becky, and President George W. Bush look on.

SGT. SARA WOOD
AMERICAN FORCES PRESS SERVICE

WASHINGTON, — Robert M. Gates was sworn in as the nation's 22nd secretary of defense in a ceremony at the Pentagon here Monday. After President Bush introduced Gates as "an experienced and thoughtful leader," Vice President Richard B. Cheney administered the oath of office. Gates was officially sworn in at the White House earlier in a private ceremony.

"It is an honor to have the opportunity to work with the people in this department — dedicated professionals whose

overriding priority is the defense of our nation," Gates said upon taking the oath at the Pentagon.

The Defense Department is carrying on many different activities, all of which are important, but the most pressing concern is the situation in Iraq, Gates said. Since being confirmed by the Senate, Gates has participated in National Security Council meetings on Iraq, received a number of briefings at the Pentagon, and discussed the situation and way forward in Iraq with the president. He said he intends to travel quite soon to Iraq and meet with

military leaders and other personnel there.

"I look forward to hearing their honest assessments of the situation on the ground and of having the benefit of their advice, unvarnished and straight from the shoulder, on how to proceed in the weeks and months ahead," Gates said.

The situation in Afghanistan is also very important, Gates said. The progress made there in the last five years cannot be undone, he said, and the U.S. and NATO must keep their commitment to the Afghan people.

"How we face these and other challenges in the region over the next two years will determine whether Iraq, Afghanistan, and other nations at a crossroads will pursue paths of gradual progress towards sustainable governments, which are allies in the global war on terrorism, or whether the forces of extremism and chaos will become ascendant," he said.

Bush also emphasized that America is at a time of great consequence in the war on terror. The secretary of defense must understand the challenges of the present, see the threats of the future, and provide the best possible advice to help direct the nation's armed forces as they engage the enemies of freedom around the world, he said.

Gates is the right man for the job, Bush said.

"He knows the stakes in the war on terror," Bush said of Gates. "He recognizes this is a long struggle against an enemy unlike any our nation has fought before. He understands that defeating the terrorists and the radicals and the Middle East is essential to leading towards peace. As

secretary of defense, he will help our country forge a new way forward in Iraq so that we can help the Iraqis achieve our shared goal of a unified, democratic Iraq that can govern itself, sustain itself and defend itself, and be an ally in our struggle against extremists and radicals."

Everyone wants to find a way to bring America's troops home, Gates said, but the U.S. cannot afford to fail in the Middle East. "Failure in Iraq at this juncture would be a calamity that would haunt our nation, impair our credibility, and endanger Americans for decades to come," he said.

Bush cited Gates' long career in public service: He started in an entry-level position at the Central Intelligence Agency in 1966, rose to become its director, has worked under six presidents, and spent almost nine years on the National Security Council staff.

"Bob Gates' lifetime of preparation will serve him well as the secretary of defense," Bush said.

Bush and Gates both praised outgoing Defense Secretary Donald H. Rumsfeld, noting his exceptional leadership during a time of change at DoD. "Donald Rumsfeld has devoted decades of his life to public service," Gates said. "He cares deeply about our men and women in uniform and the future of our country."

Gates said that defense transformation will remain a priority for him, and he pledged to involve in the decision-making processes those who will ultimately carry out the decisions.

"I return to public service in the hope that I can make a difference at a time when our nation is facing daunting challenges and difficult choices," he said.

DEDICATION from A1

"We are a non-profit organization whose purpose is to support the college and its events," Workman explained about the CMC Foundation.

The bookstore project will be the first construction to take place on campus in almost 18 years and the first of many upcoming improvements and additions to the campus, said Dr. Thom M. Armstrong, superintendent/ president of

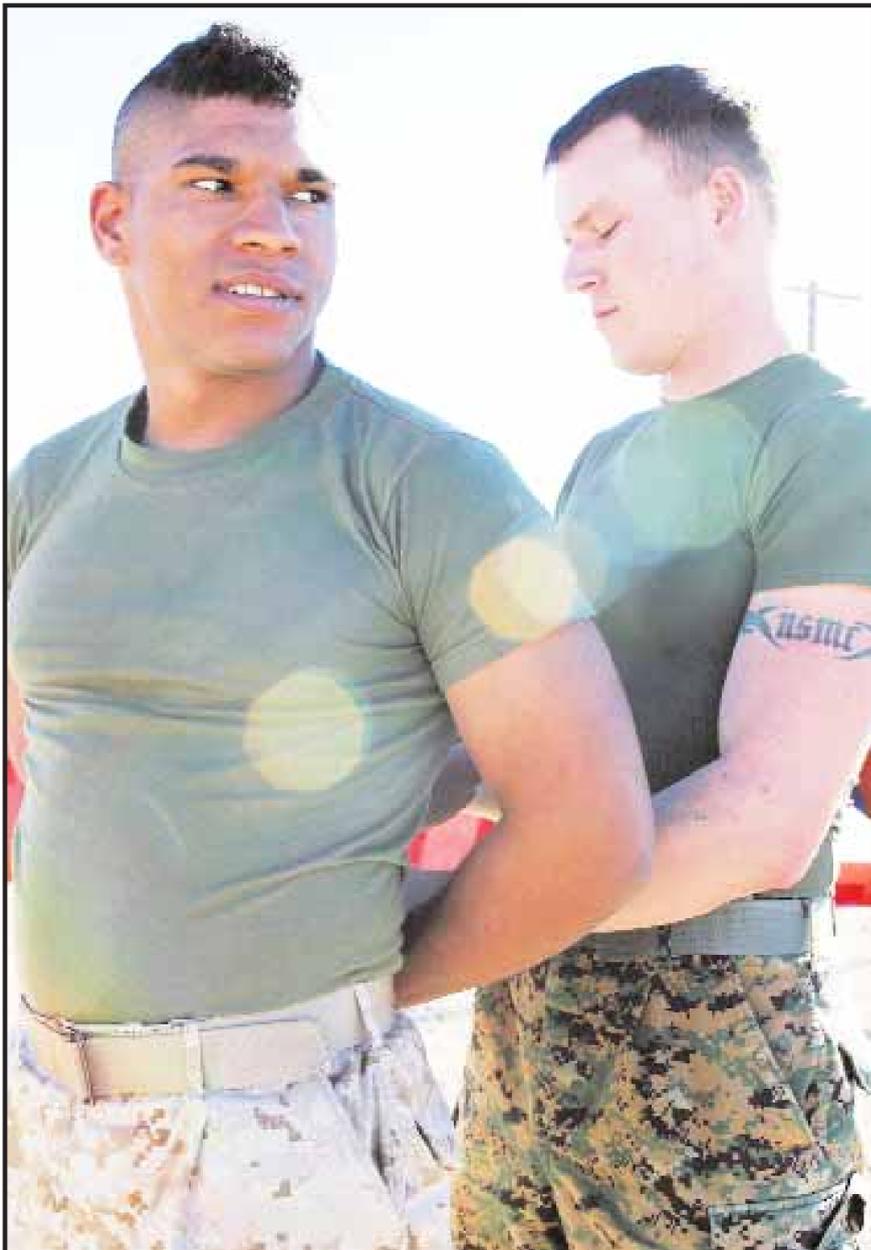
Copper Mountain College.

The project was discussed in detail for several years, but due to lack of proper funding, did not become a reality until now, said Owen Gillick, CMC Board member.

"Ernie gave us a starting point," said Gillick. "He gave us something to consider without pushing his point of view."

After retiring from the Marine Corps in 1976, and the Hughes Aircraft Company in 1989, Reid and his wife, Lou, returned to Twentynine

Palms. During his remaining years, he continued supporting the Friends of Copper Mountain College, which he began doing overseas prior to his second retirement, and was elected to the foundation's Board of Directors in 1993. He also assisted in the organization of the Action Council for 29 Palms, Inc., serving as its Executive Director through the contracting and creation of the first four murals of the many which the city has become known for.



REGINA N. ORTIZ

ATFP Marines become MPs

Pfc. Casey Ray, construction wireman, is handcuffed by Lance Cpl. Jamie Authement, special intelligence communicator, Communications and Data Directorate, Headquarters Battalion. Both Marines are members of the Headquarters Battalion Anti-Terrorism Force Protection Platoon that took part in military police training Dec. 13 on base. Marines in the ATFP platoon will be trained to be auxiliary policemen and can augment the military police force in the case of an emergency.

CHRISTIAN WORSHIP

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

For Headquarters Marines, 'a typical day is anything but' in Iraq

CAPT. MIKE ALVAREZ,
RCT-7 PUBLIC AFFAIRS

CAMP AL ASAD, Iraq — Coalition Forces wrapped up a counterinsurgency mission along the Euphrates River in western Al Anbar province late last month.

U.S. Marines, soldiers, sailors and Iraqi Police uncovered multiple weapons caches and faced two improvised explosive device attacks throughout the four-day operation without sustaining casualties.

IED attacks are the number-one killer of Coalition Forces personnel in Iraq, according to Iraq Coalition Casualty Count — an organization which tallies U.S. and coalition casualties based off Department of Defense press releases.

The largest cache netted in the operation was found in a cave containing about 300 82 mm mortar rounds and various bomb-making components, commonly used in IED attacks against Coalition and Iraqi Security Forces. Marines here deem the results a success — finding just one mortar round would have still

made their efforts worthwhile, they say.

“What we got was something that could have killed one of our Marines,” said Maj. Randal Walsh, 33, and commanding officer for Headquarters Company, Regimental Combat Team 7.

RCT-7 is the U.S. military unit responsible for training Iraqi Security Forces and providing security in more than 30,000 square miles of territory in western Al Anbar — an area which spans from the Syria/Jordan borders and East to the Euphrates River.

During last month's operation, U.S. forces and Iraqi Police swept for weapons caches and interacted with locals within the 20-mile stretch between the cities of Baghdadi and Hit, Iraq. Baghdadi, with a population of about 30,000, is located 120 miles west of Baghdad. Hit boasts a population of about 50,000 and is 25 miles south of Baghdadi.

Baghdadi policemen searched the area for weapons caches side-by-side with U.S. Marines, soldiers and sailors. Their familiarity



Marines from Regimental Combat Team 7's security platoon patrol Abu Hayatt, a village in Iraq's western Al Anbar province. GUNNERY SGT. MICHAEL Q. RETANA

with the area, language and culture contributed greatly to the mission's success as they interacted with locals and gathered valuable intelligence, Marines say.

The integration of the Iraqi Police was one of the most notable accomplishments of the mission, according to Staff Sgt. Jon Brodin, 37, and platoon commander for Headquarter Co.'s Security Platoon, what the Marines call a “jump platoon.”

“The Iraqi police were operating without direction (from the Marines), and with minimal logistics support from us,” said Brodin — a complete 180 from six months ago, he said. “Six months ago, it would have been like pulling teeth to keep them out there.”

Police found what Marines call a “fighter's cache” consist-

ing of IEDs and bomb-making material strategically placed by insurgents for quick access and escape, said Brodin, a native of Lakehurst, N.J.

Every Marine a rifleman While a headquarters company traditionally performs in an administrative, communications and logistical support role, Walsh's unit does much more in addition to these traditional roles to assist the 4,500-plus Marines, soldiers and sailors in training Iraqi Security Forces and conducting counterinsurgency operations throughout western Al Anbar Province.

Prior to their arrival here in February the company created several platoons made up of Marines and sailors within the company — administrative clerks, mechanics, communications

technicians. The results were a provisional rifle platoon and a jump security platoon.

The unit's make-up reemphasizes one of the Corps' time-proven ethos: “Every Marine a rifleman.” Of those in Headquarters Company who participated in last month's mission, only eight, were infantrymen by trade.

The platoons give the company an offensive capability, said 1st. Lt. William Johnson, 27, and executive officer for Headquarters Company, RCT-7, and Oakdale, Minn. native.

Headquarters Company frequently conducts counterinsurgency operations and pitches in to help the Marines train Iraqi soldiers and the 2,000-plus Iraqi policemen in western Al Anbar.

The Marines of Headquarters Company have performed a number of infantry missions throughout the region — patrolling in urban environments, river sweeps, manning traffic control points.

“The results definitely have exceeded my expectations,” said Johnson.

For these Marines, “a typical day is anything but typical,” said 23-year-old Sgt.

Christopher Williamson, a squad leader for the Headquarter Co.'s Jump Security Platoon, and native of Sheffield, England

Late last month, a U.S. Army helicopter landed on an explosive device during a routine training mission in the middle of western Al Anbar's desert. Brodin and his Marines braved Iraq's roadways in their armored vehicles and made their way to the disabled helicopter's location and provided security while rescue and recovery efforts were underway.

But danger is a fact of life in western Al Anbar Province, often called the “wild, wild west” of Iraq. Still, the Marines have a job to do, and despite the dangers — IEDs, ambushes, and small-arms attacks, Walsh says the Company's “Jump” Marines thrive off the impact they're making on a daily basis — keeping the region secure for Americans and Iraqis alike.

“Get the Marines out there, get their boots on the ground and their morale goes up when they know they are in the midst of making a difference,” said Walsh, a native of Phoenix, Ariz.



Lance Cpl. Nicholas Spiewak patrols near the Euphrates River near Hit, Iraq, with Regimental Combat Team 7's security platoon in Iraq's western Al Anbar province. CPL. CHRISTOPHER CARDONA, JR.

1st Recon Marines take new C-130 for a little trip

CPL. GEORGE HRUBY
1ST RECONNAISSANCE BATTALION

Taking leaps few others in the world have the courage to take, the Marines of 1st Reconnaissance Battalion, conducted parachute training in the skies above Marine Air Ground Combat Center 29 Palms, Dec. 15.

After loading onboard a KC-130J Hercules from Marine Aerial/Ground Refueler Squadron 352 at sunset at Palm Springs International Airport, Recon Marines flew over the Combat Center to make night jumps into the black abyss below, conducting static line jumps from 2,000 feet and military free fall jumps from 10,000 feet.

"Standing on the ramp it was really cold at 30 degrees, but as soon as I jumped out of the aircraft it wasn't cold anymore because my adrenaline shot up," said Staff Sgt. Daniel G. Middleton, a military free faller. According to Middleton falling through the

air was surreal because the valley below was black but they could still see the fading sunlight over the hills.

Keeping safety first, Recon jump masters, and the airborne commander, conducted multiple jumper personal inspections of equipment and had the Marines practice Parachute Landing Falls before loading the aircraft. The SF-10 parachute is used for static line jumps and is difficult to steer during landing, requiring jumpers to keep their feet and knees together to avoid injury, and to place their arms in front of their face.

Some hazards to military free fall parachutist are unseen dangers like poles, power lines and other jumpers. Jumping without night vision goggles, Recon Marines landed without any problems, due to the jump masters ensuring all safety rules were followed and the landing area was clearly marked with chem lights.

The term static line means

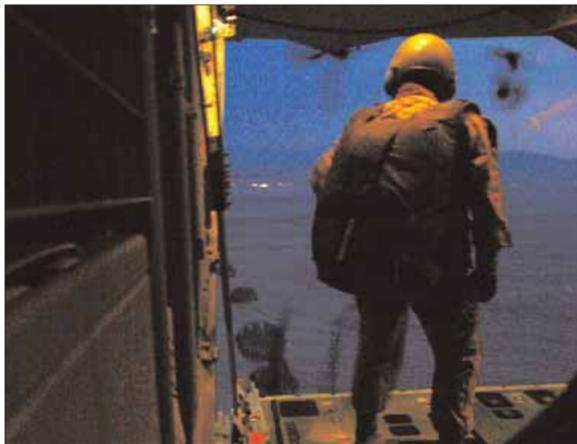
the main parachute is opened automatically by a line connecting the parachute to the airplane. With free fall parachutes, the jumper is not connected to the plane and opens their own parachute as well as steers the canopy by means of two toggles, one on the left and one on the right to allow the parachute to turn.

According to Master Sgt. Keith G. Blucher who was the senior enlisted crewman and load master of the KC-130J Hercules that night, Recon is very professional, and the mission was a great success, as a result of a good working relationship between the two units.

On its third flight since being built, this particular KC-130J Hercules had never been utilized in this kind of mission before. Recon had the opportunity to christen the Hercules first jump run.

Upon conclusion of the jump, several Marines with the battalion earned their gold jump wings, which are earned after a Marine has completed a combination of 10 jumps, five in jump school and five in their unit, each set of five jumps consist of one jump without a combat load, two day jumps with a combat load, and two night jumps with a combat load. A combat load refers to having a pack hooked into the harness in front of the upper thigh.

It takes great courage to jump off the ramp of the aircraft, it takes good judgment to land where your suppose to, and it takes experienced jump masters to have everyone walk away unharmed, as the load master of the KC-130J said the mission was a great success.



CPL. GEORGE HRUBY

A jump master with 1st Reconnaissance Battalion watches as Marines conduct static line jumps from a KC-130J Hercules Dec. 15 above the Combat Center.

2007 Tournament of Roses President visits Combat Center



LANCER CPL. REGINA N. ORTIZ

Combat Center commanding general, Brig. Gen. Douglas M. Stone, stands beside band master, Master Sgt. Grady May, and drum major, Staff Sgt. Joe Streeter, as they are presented a flag from the 2007 Tournament of Roses president, Paul Holman. The Combat Center Band will be the host band in next year's 118th Rose Bowl Parade Jan. 1, at 8 a.m. in Pasadena, Calif. The Rose Parade will be broadcast on ABC, NBC, Univision, HGTV, Travel Channel, Discovery HD, and seen in more than 150 international territories.

Tax season is right around the corner

AMY TORYK

TAX MANAGER

Tax season is approaching. Start collecting your tax information so you can visit the tax center to have your return prepared and electronically filed to the Internal Revenue Service, California and other states at no charge. Preparers are being trained to assist you.

The tax center, located at the Village Center, is scheduled to open Monday, Jan. 22. The hours will be 8:00 a.m. to 3:30 p.m. Monday through Friday. It is recommended that service members and their families make an appointment by calling 830-4829. The tax office will begin scheduling appointments on Tuesday, Jan. 16th. Walk-ins are welcome, although someone without an appointment will probably wait behind those who made one prior to coming. No children are allowed at the tax center so please make arrangements for day care.

The first four weeks of the

tax season are the busiest. Bring a book or magazine to pass the time as walk-in taxpayers may have a long wait.

A paid preparer charges approximately \$75-\$200 for preparation only and offers a "Refund Anticipation Loan" so taxpayers get their refund instantly; bank fees on these instant loans average \$70-\$225 depending on the amount of your refund.

The tax center will prepare the return and get your refund deposited directly into your account in 5-10 business days for free, saving you a total of \$145-\$425. Be patient and don't rush to the paid preparers out in town.

These services are available to active duty, retirees and their family members. Services include tax return preparation, electronic filing, advice, tax publications and forms. The tax center does not prepare returns with rental property, self-employment or complicated capital gains. If you itemize your deductions

because you own your home or have other qualifying expenses, Feb. 15 is the earliest the tax center will prepare your return because tax documents continue to be received through early February and the initial rush will be over.

A tax preparer will check-in each service member or spouse and ensure they brought in all information necessary before starting the filing process. Items needed are: W-2's for all jobs worked for taxpayer and spouse, 1099's for interest or dividends earned in a bank or credit union, social security cards, full names and birth dates for everyone, social security number or EIN of day care provider(s), name, address, phone number and amount paid, a blank check or myPay bank printout, last year's tax return, original Power of Attorney if needed, divorce decree or Forms 8332 or 2120 if claiming a child not living with you, 1098-T if college tuition and fees were paid, and any other relevant information.

W-2s are available on myPay (<https://mypay.dfas.mil>). W-2s for Marines should be available 5 Jan. All other active duty services are scheduled for Jan. 22 according to the myPay web site.

If you do not have the military W-2 because your spouse is deployed or out of the area, and you have his personal identification number, go to myPay and print out the W-2. You will need spouse's original POA to sign the tax return if filing jointly.

If you do not have his PIN contact your spouse at your earliest convenience to obtain it. The Disbursing Office, located at building 1521, or the Installation Personnel Administrative Center (IPAC) located at building 1450 and 1459, will not issue PINs with a POA.

If you do not have your spouse's POA, please contact your spouse and request a POA. He can e-mail or fax you the W-2, but you will still need the original POA to sign the tax return. Some of the computers available on base with Internet access are at the Learning Resource Center in building 1527, the Library in building 1528 or Information and Referral in building 1551.

Single Marines who are new to the Marine Corps should talk to their parents before filing. Oftentimes, the parents are entitled to claim him as a dependent. If the ser-

vice member does not know this, the IRS will reject his tax return.

In 2004 Governor Arnold Schwarzenegger and the California Legislature enacted a state law conforming California's tax code to the Service Members' Civil Relief Act preventing California from using a non-resident member's military pay to increase tax liability. This law allows service members to amend their California tax returns as far back as the 2002 tax year in order to reduce the amount of tax resulting in a possible refund. The tax center can assist you with your amended return beginning Feb. 15th. If you did not file your 2005 or other prior year tax return the tax center can also assist you beginning Feb. 15.

Enlisted service members and warrant officers who served in a combat zone this year for any part of a month will receive exclusion on their gross pay for all military pay received for that month. For commissioned officers who served, the maximum monthly exclusion is the highest enlisted pay, plus any hostile fire or imminent danger pay received, according to the Internal Revenue Service's website located at <http://www.irs.gov>.

Service members who were injured and hospitalized because of injuries sustained while serving in a combat zone are excluded from paying taxes on their gross income for the period of hospitalization for up to 2 years after the last date they served in the combat zone, the website further states.

Spouses who file tax returns for their service members while deployed or unavailable must provide the original power of attorney authorizing the spouse to sign.

For further information and to schedule appointments, contact the tax center at 830-4829.

Time running short for 2006 Tax moves

IRS NEWS RELEASE

SAN DIEGO — The Internal Revenue Service today reminded taxpayers they have less than four weeks left to make their final financial moves for the 2006 tax year.

Taxpayers can take the first step toward planning by reviewing tax law changes featured on the IRS Web site. A little advance planning now could save taxpayers time, and perhaps even money later.

For many families, tax planning may mean adjusting withholding allowances for more take home pay, gathering records for pertinent deductions like the child and dependent care credit or considering charitable donations. A 2006 law change states that clothing and household goods donated after Aug. 17, must be in good condition or better in order to qualify for a charitable deduction.

For investors, tax planning may mean deciding which stocks to sell or buy. It may also mean contributing to a tax deferred retirement plan or IRA. The maximum IRA contribution for the 2006 tax year is \$5,000. The Retirement Savings Contribution Credit, or "Saver's Credit" is also available to eligible taxpayers and was made permanent from the Pension Protection Act of 2006.

The Energy Act of 2005, the Tax Increase Protection and Reconciliation Act and the Pension Protection Act all came into play in 2006. All three offer several major tax law provisions to be mindful of.

Eligible taxpayers can

deduct IRA contributions and moving expenses if applicable. Students may deduct interest on college loans and spouses may deduct alimony payments. These items are among the tax deductions that are "above the line" and can reduce taxable income.

Many benefit by itemizing their deductions on Schedule A of Form 1040. Taxpayers should consider using Schedule A if their itemized deductions exceed their standard deduction. For the 2006 tax year, the standard deduction is \$5,150 for single taxpayers and \$10,300 for taxpayers who file married filing jointly.

Among the common deductions itemized on Schedule A are state and local income taxes, real estate taxes and home mortgage interest. Charitable donations are only deductible on Schedule A and taxpayers should keep a record, or paper trail of their contributions. For car donations, taxpayers should consider the 2005 law change that generally allows only the gross proceeds of the car sale at auction to be deducted rather than fair market value.

Refinance or sell a home this year? Eligible taxpayers may be able to deduct some costs associated with their loans such as points and home mortgage interest. Taxpayers who sell their home after living in it as their main residence for two of five years may exclude from tax up to \$500,000 in capital gains from the sale of the home.

The IRS Web site is a reliable federal tax resource. Taxpayers are encouraged to visit <http://www.irs.gov> for more information.



Gang way

Corpsmen with 1st Reconnaissance Battalion rush a simulated casualty to the battalion aid station Sunday for treatment during a training exercise after being dropped off by an air medevac at Range 215.

CPL. GEORGE HRUBY

**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 Hill 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
Life long 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:**

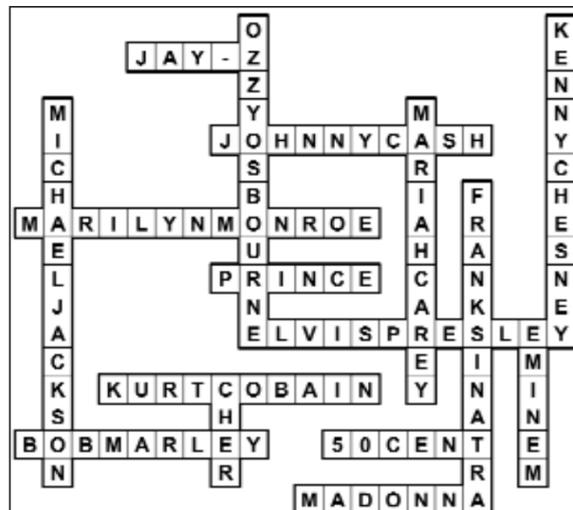
Facility	Hours	Facility	Hours
5 th Street Zone	12 PM-10 PM	Marine Palms Exchange	9 AM-3 PM
East Gym	8 AM-6 PM	Sunset Cinema	6 PM, 9 PM

All MCCS Activities will be **CLOSED NEW YEAR'S 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 Hill Bowling Ctr	12 PM-12 AM
Gas Station	8:30 AM-4 PM Credit Card 24 hours	Subway	6 AM-8 PM
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
Life long Learning Library	10 AM-6 PM	Taco Bell	10 PM-10 PM

All MCCS Activities will be **CLOSED NEW YEAR'S 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



Birth announcement

BLAKE WILLIAM HARSHMAN
Son of Sgt. and Mrs. Bryan Harshman
Born Sept. 28, 2006, weighing 8 lbs. 4 oz. and
measuring 21.9 inches.

BAH Rate - With Dependents

Year	E1	E2	E3	E4	E5	E6	E7	E8	E9
W/DFP 2007	\$943	\$943	\$943	\$943	\$1,009	\$1,244	\$1,330	\$1,425	\$1,512
WO/DEP 2007	\$741	\$741	\$741	\$741	\$832	\$885	\$947	\$1,055	\$1,128
W/DEP 2008	\$863	\$863	\$863	\$863	\$908	\$1,133	\$1,223	\$1,322	\$1,420
WO/DEP	\$639	\$639	\$639	\$639	\$706	\$756	\$871	\$1,015	\$1,081
W/DEP 2005	\$801	\$801	\$801	\$801	\$859	\$957	\$1,026	\$1,102	\$1,177
WO/DEP	\$643	\$643	\$643	\$643	\$710	\$751	\$805	\$878	\$909
2004	\$618	\$618	\$618	\$618	\$673	\$787	\$827	\$890	\$967
2007 INCREASE	\$80	\$80	\$80	\$80	\$23	\$111	\$107	\$103	\$92
Percentage Change	8%	8%	8%	8%	7%	9%	8%	7%	6%

BAH Rate - With Dependents

Year	W1	W2	W3	W4	W5	O1E	O2E	O3E
W/DEP 2007	\$1,245	\$1,369	\$1,484	\$1,523	\$1,568	\$1,349	\$1,467	\$1,530
WO/DEP 2007	\$917	\$1,054	\$1,135	\$1,266	\$1,351	\$1,009	\$1,112	\$1,244
W/DFP 2006	\$1,135	\$1,264	\$1,384	\$1,433	\$1,490	\$1,243	\$1,356	\$1,442
WO/DEP	\$816	\$1,014	\$1,065	\$1,156	\$1,245	\$908	\$1,050	\$1,133
W/DEP 2005	\$958	\$1,057	\$1,149	\$1,188	\$1,233	\$1,041	\$1,135	\$1,195
WO/DEP	\$779	\$878	\$912	\$974	\$1,043	\$859	\$902	\$957
2004	\$788	\$849	\$933	\$980	\$1,033	\$836	\$921	\$988
2007 INCREASE	\$110	\$105	\$100	\$90	\$78	\$106	\$101	\$88
Percentage Change	9%	8%	7%	6%	5%	9%	7%	6%

BAH Rate - With Dependents

Year	O1	O2	O3	O4	O5	O6	O7
W/DEP 2007	\$1,036	\$1,239	\$1,480	\$1,588	\$1,661	\$1,675	\$1,694
WO/DEP 2007	\$876	\$986	\$1,160	\$1,339	\$1,398	\$1,484	\$1,514
W/DEP 2008	\$1,003	\$1,130	\$1,379	\$1,514	\$1,607	\$1,620	\$1,639
WO/DEP	\$739	\$943	\$1,080	\$1,232	\$1,292	\$1,384	\$1,412
W/DEP 2005	\$870	\$955	\$1,146	\$1,252	\$1,325	\$1,336	\$1,351
WO/DEP	\$743	\$839	\$922	\$1,033	\$1,079	\$1,149	\$1,172
2004	\$686	\$785	\$930	\$1,056	\$1,143	\$1,152	\$1,166
2007 INCREASE	\$33	\$109	\$101	\$74	\$54	\$55	\$55
Percentage Change	3%	9%	7%	5%	3%	3%	3%

This is a table showing the new basic allowance for housing rates as published by the 2007 Defense Authorization Act. On the following page is the new monthly basic pay table. Both rates go into effect Jan. 1. Cut these out and keep them for future reference.

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

Name _____
 ID # _____
 Pick up at _____
 Destination _____
 Total fee _____
 Driver _____
 Date/Time _____
 Signature _____

Monthly Basic Pay Table

Effective 1 January 2007

YEARS OF SERVICE

PAY GRADE	<2	2	3	4	6	8	10	12	14	16	18	20	22	24	26
COMMISSIONED OFFICERS															
O-10	0.00	0.00	0.00	0.00	0.00	0.00	0.00	0.00	0.00	0.00	0.00	13859.00	13725.90	14011.20	14508.60
O-9	0.00	0.00	0.00	0.00	0.00	0.00	0.00	0.00	0.00	0.00	0.00	11946.60	12119.50	12367.20	12901.30
O-8	8453.10	8729.70	8913.60	8964.90	9194.10	9577.20	9666.30	10030.20	10134.30	10447.80	10900.80	11319.00	11598.30	11598.30	11598.30
O-7	7023.90	7350.00	7501.20	7621.20	7838.40	8052.90	8301.30	8548.80	8797.20	8577.20	10238.00	10238.00	10238.00	10238.00	10287.90
O-6	5208.20	5719.20	6094.50	6094.50	6117.80	6380.10	6414.80	6414.80	6779.10	7423.80	7802.10	8180.10	8395.20	8613.00	9035.70
O-5	4339.00	4800.00	5227.50	5291.10	5502.00	5628.00	5908.40	6110.10	6373.20	6776.40	6960.10	7158.00	7373.10	7373.10	7373.10
O-4	3744.60	4334.70	4623.90	4688.40	4956.90	5244.60	5602.80	5882.40	6076.20	6187.50	6252.30	6252.30	6252.30	6252.30	6252.30
O-3	3292.20	3732.30	4028.40	4392.00	4602.00	4833.00	4982.70	5228.40	5355.90	5355.90	5355.90	5355.90	5355.90	5355.90	5355.90
O-2	2844.30	3239.70	3731.40	3857.40	3938.60	3938.60	3938.60	3938.60	3938.60	3938.60	3938.60	3938.60	3938.60	3938.60	3938.60
O-1	2488.20	2998.00	3106.50	3106.50	3106.50	3106.50	3106.50	3106.50	3106.50	3106.50	3106.50	3106.50	3106.50	3106.50	3106.50
COMMISSIONED OFFICERS WITH OVER 4 YEARS ACTIVE DUTY SERVICE AS AN ENLISTED MEMBER OR WARRANT OFFICER															
O-3E	0.00	0.00	0.00	4392.00	4602.00	4833.00	4982.70	5228.40	5355.40	5554.20	5715.90	5715.90	5715.90	5715.90	5715.90
O-2E	0.00	0.00	0.00	3938.60	3938.60	4082.00	4273.50	4437.00	4558.80	4558.80	4558.80	4558.80	4558.80	4558.80	4558.80
O-1E	0.00	0.00	0.00	3106.50	3317.70	3440.10	3565.50	3688.80	3857.40	3857.40	3857.40	3857.40	3857.40	3857.40	3857.40
WARRANT OFFICERS															
W-5	0.00	0.00	0.00	0.00	0.00	0.00	0.00	0.00	0.00	0.00	0.00	5845.80	6046.50	6247.50	6450.00
W-4	3402.00	3660.00	3765.00	3888.50	4046.40	4222.20	4400.70	4574.10	4753.80	5035.50	5215.80	5392.20	5574.90	5754.90	5938.80
W-3	3108.00	3238.10	3369.00	3412.80	3552.00	3711.30	3821.80	4128.20	4350.00	4515.80	4680.60	4751.40	4824.80	4964.20	5143.20
W-2	2732.70	2888.70	3025.50	3124.50	3209.70	3443.70	3622.50	3755.10	3895.00	3973.00	4048.00	4191.00	4332.30	4475.40	4675.40
W-1	2413.20	2510.60	2742.90	2829.40	3056.10	3193.50	3315.30	3451.20	3541.20	3622.80	3755.40	3856.20	3956.20	3856.20	3856.20
ENLISTED MEMBERS															
E-9	0.00	0.00	0.00	0.00	0.00	0.00	4110.80	4200.80	4321.20	4459.50	4590.40	4821.80	5010.30	5209.20	5512.80
E-8	0.00	0.00	0.00	0.00	0.00	3364.80	3513.90	3605.00	3716.40	3835.80	4051.80	4161.30	4347.30	4450.50	4704.90
E-7	2339.10	2553.00	2650.80	2780.70	2881.50	3055.20	3152.70	3290.20	3424.20	3511.20	3693.70	3644.10	3814.80	3925.20	4204.20
E-6	2023.20	2228.00	2324.40	2419.80	2519.40	2744.10	2831.40	2928.30	3013.50	3043.50	3084.50	3084.50	3084.50	3084.50	3084.50
E-5	1854.00	1977.80	2073.30	2171.40	2323.00	2454.90	2551.50	2682.10	2682.10	2502.10	2582.10	2582.10	2582.10	2582.10	2582.10
E-4	1899.50	1786.50	1893.10	1970.50	2062.00	2062.80	2062.00	2062.00	2062.00	2062.00	2062.00	2062.00	2062.00	2062.00	2062.00
E-3	1534.20	1630.80	1729.20	1729.20	1729.20	1729.20	1729.20	1729.20	1729.20	1729.20	1729.20	1729.20	1729.20	1729.20	1729.20
E-2	1458.90	1458.90	1458.90	1458.90	1458.90	1458.90	1458.90	1458.90	1458.90	1458.90	1458.90	1458.90	1458.90	1458.90	1458.90
E-1 >4	1301.40	1301.40	1301.40	1301.40	1301.40	1301.40	1301.40	1301.40	1301.40	1301.40	1301.40	1301.40	1301.40	1301.40	1301.40
E-1 <4	1203.90	0.00	0.00	0.00	0.00	0.00	0.00	0.00	0.00	0.00	0.00	0.00	0.00	0.00	0.00
C/S		15958.40	M/S	6642.80											

FY2007, 2.2% Pay Raise Increase. Public Law No. 109-364 National Defense Auth Act, signed into law on October 17, 2006.

FY2007, increases cap on basic pay for general and flag officers (O7-O10)

from Level III to Level II of the Executive Schedule. Level III and Level V increased by 1.7%.

NOTE-BASIC PAY FOR O7-O10 IS LIMITED TO \$14,000.10

LEVEL II OF THE EXECUTIVE SCHEDULE

NOTE-BASIC PAY FOR O6 AND BELOW IS LIMITED TO \$11,348.80

LEVEL V OF THE EXECUTIVE SCHEDULE

2/7 Marines re-enlist at cyclic rate

LANCE CPL. RANDY LITTLE

COMBAT CORRESPONDENT

Many civilians decide to enlist in the Marine Corps each year and serve a minimum of four years before separating from the Marines.

To keep Marines interested in staying in the Corps for a second or third term, the Marine Corps has set aside a fund each fiscal year to use as a monetary incentive to re-enlist.

During this time, depending on the need of each particular career field, Marines are given incentives such as a bonus or a choice of duty station.

Each fiscal year the Marine Corps sets a mission statement for re-enlistments per unit.

In fiscal year 2006, 2nd Battalion 7th Marine Regiment was tasked with a mission of 16 re-enlistments and blew away the mission quota with 22

Marines, said Sgt. Robert L. Byrne, the Battalion career retention specialist.

Fiscal year 2007 began Oct. 1 and a mission statement has still not been released to anyone about how many Marines the Corps needs this year.

"Headquarters Marine Corps has not put out a mission statement for fiscal year '07 but have stated they would be releasing it during the first few weeks of Dec. '06," Byrne said.

Although the mission has not been released, 2/7 has re-enlisted 42 Marines, crushing last year's mission already.

"Boat spaces are filling up fast this year and 'fence sitters' that aren't sure if they want to re-enlist or not need to decide quickly because the 0311 military occupational specialty, the biggest MOS in the Marines, for 2/7 is already 96 percent full," explained Byrne.

Besides re-enlisting 42 Marines, 2/7 recently breached the one million

dollar marker for re-enlistment bonuses when Cpl. Adam Lewis, an infantryman with Company F re-enlisted last week.

"I've been a career retention specialist for five years and I have never seen a career field close up so fast with Marines re-enlisting," Byrne exclaimed.

For Marines that want to re-enlist they need to hurry up and put in for a re-enlistment package as soon as possible, because with all of the incentives and spaces filling up, soon they won't be able to.

There are a lot of incentives for Marines to re-enlist now such as: special duty preferences, airborne school and duty station preferences, explained Byrne.

"We're trying to stress as much as possible that those Marines getting to the end of their contracts that want to stay in need to re-enlist now," he said.

Although, 2/7 has re-enlisted 42 Marines 70 days into the fiscal year, there are still spots available for Marines nearing the end of their contract.

LEISURE

Motorcycle safety course keeps Marines cruisin' with less bruising'

AMERICAN RED CROSS ADULT/ CHILD/ INFANT CPR/FIRST AID

American Red Cross will be giving a class on Adult/Child/Infant CPR and First Aid on Jan. 27 from 8 a.m. to 5 p.m. at the Village Center. The cost is \$25 and eight slots are available.

For more information please American Red Cross office at 830-6685.

CHRISTMAS SERVICES OVER THE HOLIDAY

All Marines, sailors and families are invited to an evening of worship at Christ Chapel at 5 p.m., Sunday. This will be a Christian, non-denominational celebration.

A traditional candlelight service featuring the Scripture lessons and Christmas carols will begin at 7 p.m. at the Protestant Chapel.

The Immaculate Heart of Mary Chapel will hold a children's Christmas Eve Mass Sunday at 5 p.m.; midnight mass, and a Christmas morning mass at 9 a.m.

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.

GROUND HOG JOB SHADOW DAY

This year's Ground Hog Job Shadow Day will take place Feb. 2. This event is an extraordinary opportunity to influence potential future Marines by inviting young people from local communities to experience a day in the life of a Marine, sailor or MCAGCC civilian employee. Each year, high school students are invited aboard the installation to "shadow" a volunteer Marine, sailor or civilian throughout their work day. The intent is to allow the students an opportunity to observe a military or service-related trade for consideration as a potential career choice after graduation. All commands are encouraged to offer their support. The coordinator for this event is Sgt. Robert Fisher, 830-5472.

Did You Know?

The Capitol building in Washington, D.C., has 365 steps to represent every day of the year.



Marines in the Experienced Rider's Course practice u-turn and maneuvering exercises during the eight-hour class.

LANCE CPL. REGINA N. ORTIZ

LANCE CPL. NICOLE A. LAVINE

COMBAT CORRESPONDENT

The Combat Center Safety Office is now providing a new and improved motorcycle safety course to any Marines, sailors, contractors or dependants interested in learning how to ride a motorcycle or improve their riding skills.

The Motorcycle Safety Foundation, a national non-profit organization, is responsible for the new improvements in both the beginner and experienced rider's courses. The MSF worked with the safety office to construct a more flexible base contract on motorcycle safety for riders, making it required to take the course in order to

receive a base decal sticker.

Master Sgt. Anthony N. Brenner, the Combat Center ground safety inspector, said the new changes allow more students to learn in a shorter period of time.

"In the older beginner's course, we could only teach a class of six students twice a month," said Brenner. "That's only giving 12 people per month the necessary

training in safe riding. Our course was back-logged all the way to June before we added these new spots."

The class room hours take place on the first Wednesday of each month from 4 to 10 p.m. in order to minimize the impact on the command. The following weekend is when students get their riding time in, with a four-hour class Saturday and a three-hour class Sunday.

"We can provide the first six riders with personal protective equipment and the motorcycle itself," added Brenner. "There is no riding experience required to take the BRC."

Brenner said the newer BRC, which will be offered three times a month, still provides up to six riders with

See SAFETY B2

Fun Festival marks 15 years of holiday tradition

LANCE CPL. NICOLE A. LAVINE

COMBAT CORRESPONDENT

Marine Corps Community Services hosted its 15th annual Family Fun Festival Dec. 15 at the Main Exchange.

The festival is considered a valued tradition during the holiday season, said Ron Arden, merchandise manager for all exchanges aboard the Combat Center.

"We try to create the best sale of the year and give the best prices for the holidays as possible," said Arden. "This is our way of giving back to the families and showing them our appreciation for the loyalty and patronage they've given us for so many years."

The festival, which provided lowered prices on merchandise throughout the store, featured numerous activities for children, held drawings for prizes and presented families with a fun, relaxing environment.

In addition to the other activities, children had an opportunity to get their picture taken with Santa and Mrs. Clause.

A puppet show, featuring characters like Alvin and the Chipmunks, was given for the children twice during the day and was organized by Larenda Stewart.

"The puppet show has been a tradition in the Holiday Festival for almost 10 years now," said Arden. "It's really good for the kids."

Next was story time, where Kimberley Seals, an MCCS library technician, read the book titled "Jingle Bells" to the little ones. Although this is Seals' first year participating in the festival, she is also involved in the children's projects at the Combat Center library.

Audrey Rutten, known for her role as Jiffy the Clown, entertained

the children while Virginia Neal, a face painter, and Teresa Danek, a character artist, amused everybody with their artistic talents.

"This is a great way to incorporate local talent in the area," said Arden.

Arden said he has been present for every Fun Festival that has taken place since its beginning 15 years ago.

"We have always had a terrific turnout for this," said Arden. "It's something we look forward to every year, and we want to make it nice for everyone who's married, single, active duty or retired."

Nicole Brown, wife of Gunnery Sgt. Kyle Brown with 1st Tank Battalion, said this is her second time attending the festival, and her kids were very enthusiastic about coming again this year.

"The kids were really excited about the puppet show, and he just loves Santa," said Brown, referring to her son, Tyler. "We also come here to take part in the sales and drawings."

Prizes included Clinique beauty supplies, a Proctor Silex coffee machine, an FR300 multi-purpose radio, cold-weather sweat shirts, a cooking set, Coach hand bags, and an AOC 20-inch T.V.

Sgt. Wes Ellett, 3rd Light Armored Reconnaissance Battalion, won an Anne Klein watch, which he said he would give to his mother, and HN Malin Morrison won an Estee Lauder perfume set.

"This was so worth it," said Morrison, after claiming his prize.

In addition to the entertainment and prizes provided to the exchange shoppers, free food and drinks were also provided by MCCS catering services.

The festival lived up to its reputation and continued to impress the Combat Center patrons.



Mr. and Mrs. Clause paid a visit to the Main Exchange Dec. 15th to take photos with the families who attended the Holiday Fun Festival.

LANCE CPL. NICOLE A. LAVINE

SAFETY from A1

gear and motorcycles, in addition to five more available openings.

"The catch is that the people who fill the next five spots need to have their own gear and motorcycles," said Brenner.

The experienced rider's course also holds 11 available positions for students, and only requires a one-day, eight-hour class on Saturday.

The increase in class size has reduced the back-logging to January instead of June. That means more riders will have adequate experience and control when riding off base, said Brenner.

"The courses enforce the driving skills within the capabilities of the individual," Brenner said.

Unlike a standard safety stand-down brief given to Marines and sailors before an extended liberty period, the BRC's and ERC's are more hands-on and fun.

Brenner said he thinks people buy motorcycles in the first place because they allow for social and exciting times.

"Motorcycles are part of the culture here [California]," said Brenner. "There are a lot of reasons a service member, especially ones who just returned from deployment, would want a motorcycle. They have deployment money to burn and the gas prices are a little better."

But with so many young people purchasing bikes and not enough people instructing them on safety issues, accidents are bound to happen.

It is tragic when service members, especially ones who have just returned from a war zone, are killed in traffic accidents. The courses may not prevent all accidents from happening, but they do give riders a better grasp on smart maneuvering and safety, in hopes to reduce that risk.



LANCE CPL. NICOLE A. LAVINE

Marines in the experienced rider's course receive a debriefing from coach Paul Ratchford before officially graduating the class.

Coachella Valley Alumnae Panhellenic donates to Toys for Tots at annual luncheon



LANCE CPL. REGINA N. ORTIZ

Gunnery Sgt. Christine Britt and Cpl. Lisa Posa, supply clerks from the base's Consolidated Material Support Center, gather toys donated at the Coachella Valley Alumnae Panhellenic Toys for Tots Luncheon in Rancho Mirage.

LANCE CPL. REGINA N. ORTIZ

COMBAT CORRESPONDENT

RANCHO MIRAGE, Calif. — More than 200 ladies from The Coachella Valley Alumnae Panhellenic welcomed female Marines to their annual Toys for Tots luncheon Dec. 14.

The members of the organization collected more than 200 toys, including a BMX bicycle, for the Toys for Tots campaign that will be distributed to families in need for the Christmas holiday in the Coachella Valley.

The organization is made up of 258 women who were part of more than 26 various sororities across the nation. Since their beginning in 1954, their mission has been to raise money for scholarships for young women in need to go to college. They have raised more than \$170,000 in the last five years to contribute to young

women's education. Now, there are 16 women furthering their education with the financial help of the CVAP, according to their official Web site, <http://coachellapanhellenic.org>.

Since 2002, the group has contributed to Toys for Tots with a luncheon in honor of the program, inviting female Marines from the Combat Center to attend. This is an opportunity for two different types of sisterhoods to join forces for the needs of the community, explained Gina Bikales, CVAP member and Toys for Tots chair, before introducing the Marines to the crowd.

The Marines were glad to be there representing one of the Marine Corps' trademark goodwill programs. Dressed in the identifiable Blue Dress uniform, the Marines each spoke about their military experiences and gave thanks to the organization for their support.

"It was very motivating for

the women of the organization to take the time out to help kids by donating toys," said Lance Cpl. Kenyetta Brown, warehouse clerk at the Consolidated Material Support Center, after the event. "Also, that the same women help females in high school with a better chance to go to college."

"It was a great experience and I would enjoy doing it again," she continued.

Seeing the women band together for a good cause inspired Brown to push other female Marines to bond in the same sense.

"I think females in the military should stick together in the armed forces where men are the majority," she explained. "Humanitarian acts and community service is a great way to do that."

The women of CVAP enjoyed the Marines' company as well.

"This is probably everyone's favorite event throughout the year," said Bikales. "We love seeing the Marines and talking with them, while supporting a good cause."

"Community service is something we have been doing since being part of our sororities. We love doing it and it's a good chance for all of us to get together and have a good time," she explained.

The local Toys for Tots campaign had their last distribution Thursday at the Twentynine Palms Community Center, but the Toys for Tots efforts go year round. Committee meetings to improve the program are ongoing to ensure no child is left behind.

The CVAP ladies will be continuing their tradition of the Toys for Tots luncheon, inviting female Marines to share in the festivities, as long as both organizations exist, said Bikales.

