

# OBSERVATION Post

MARINE CORPS AIR GROUND COMBAT CENTER

JANUARY 26, 2007

SERVING THE TWENTYNINE PALMS COMMUNITY SINCE 1957

VOL. 50 ISSUE 3

## Camp Wilson convoy simulators train Marines in 360° virtual reality

LANCE CPL. KATELYN A. KNAUER  
COMBAT CORRESPONDENT

The day starts out early like all the others. The Marines, who are equipped with everything they need to conduct a routine patrol, load into the humvee. Today is a sunny day as they move through the streets of Fallujah, only to be stopped by an improvised explosive device just miles down the road. Using the training they have received, the Marines call in the explosive ordnance disposal team. As they stand by for EOD, they receive gunfire from a nearby house. Before they can do anything, one of their men is struck down. It is now in

their hands to get him medevaced, and quick.

This is only one of several scenarios different units receive during convoy simulator training at Camp Wilson. The purpose of the training is to prepare Marines who are going overseas with the proper training to handle the numerous situations they will experience during different missions.

"This is a fully immersible convoy simulator," said Staff Sgt. Hector Viramontes, tactics instructor. "So it teaches Marines tactics, techniques, procedures and combat convoy operations. Units can come in here and evaluate their Marines on the different things they can

experience overseas."

There are currently four different simulators at Camp Wilson in use for convoy training. Each trailer contains the exact same setup as the others. The simulators contain a 360 screen which displays actual terrain from Baghdad and Fallujah. They also contain a replica of a humvee equipped with M16-A2 service rifles and a movable turret manned with a .50-caliber machine gun.

"The training can take a minimum of four hours to complete, but units can stay here for several days," said Staff Sgt. Frank Villaverde. "Each scenario takes about 30 minutes to

See SIMULATOR, A8



LANCE CPL. KATELYN A. KNAUER  
Convoy simulators allow Marines to train through different scenarios they might encounter in Iraq. The 360-degree virtual screen resembles actual terrain from Fallujah and Baghdad.

## Guard Force Marines: Eye in the sky at Wilson

LANCE CPL. KATELYN A. KNAUER  
COMBAT CORRESPONDENT

With a shotgun slung over his shoulder and binoculars in hand, he scans the area below him from a tower overlooking the Forward Supply Ammunition Point. Though lonely at times, his sole job is to ensure that operations run smoothly, the FASP is secure and that nothing out of the ordinary happens.

"The mission of the guard force is to provide an organized security force for the mission essential vulnerability areas, under the cognizance of the officer in charge,

second Marine Expeditionary Force, Mojave Viper Support Detachment," said Sgt. Murray Johnson, Camp Guard Chief.

The Guard Force at Camp Wilson consists of one guard commander, Capt. Joshua Truesdale, one guard chief, Sgt. Johnson, two sergeants of the guard, four corporals of the guard and 20 sentries.

"The guard force is comprised of Marines from both I MEF and II MEF," said Johnson. "These Marines come from all military occupational specialties ranging from aviation, administration, motor transportation and infantry."

See GUARD FORCE, A5

## Parents dedicate Marine's Medal of Honor to all service members

STAFF SGT. SCOTT DUNN  
HEADQUARTERS MARINE CORPS

WASHINGTON — The Medal of Honor awarded Jan. 11 at a White House ceremony belongs to all service members, according to the parents of the man who earned the honor.

Cpl. Jason L. Dunham of Scio, N.Y., posthumously received America's highest military decoration two years and nine months after succumbing to a mortal brain injury while fighting in Iraq. He served with Company K, 3rd Battalion, 7th Marines.

"We're accepting this honor for Jason, but we're also accepting this in all the servicemen and women's names," said his mother, Debra Dunham.

"Jason believed that all men on this earth should be free," said father Dan Dunham. "He also believed in his friends."

The Navy Medal of Honor, shared with the Marine Corps, is a bronze medallion hanging from an anchor sewn to a sky-blue ribbon. Presented posthumously, it is encased in oak and glass; otherwise, its bearer would wear it around his neck. But the latest Marine bestowed with the honor was not present in the flesh.

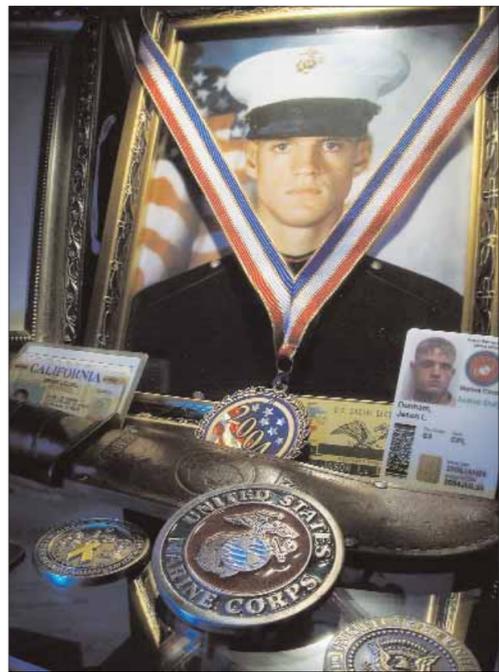
In spirit, on the other hand, Dunham filled every corner of the White House.

"We wish that Jason would have been able to be here so we could watch him," said Deb. "But we know he's watching."

In a lively reunion of sorts, more than 80 Marines from Dunham's unit soaked up their stately surroundings — many with digital cameras.

Lounging about the White House and bedecked in dress blues, the men laughed and cried as a band of brothers, a bond forged in combat, according to Maj. Trent Gibson, who was Dunham's company commander.

Six venerable Medal of Honor recipients attended the ceremony, as well as some of America's highest military and government figures.



STAFF SGT. SCOTT DUNN  
The parents of Cpl. Jason L. Dunham dedicated his Medal of Honor to all service men and women.

Seated among others in the East Room were Vice President Dick Cheney, Secretary of Defense Bob Gates, Sen. John McCain, Chairman of the Joint Chiefs Gen. Peter Pace, and Marine Corps Commandant Gen. James Conway.

Before the citation was read, President George W. Bush gave personal praise to Jason: "He had a natural gift for leadership, and a compassion that led him to take others under his wing. The Marine Corps took the best of this young man, and made it better."

See MOH, A8



LANCE CPL. KATELYN A. KNAUER  
Cpl. Cody Livingston, Camp Guard Force, looks out over the Forward Ammunition Supply Point just past Camp Wilson to ensure things are running properly and nothing out of the ordinary is going on.

### Weekend Weather

Friday 62/35  
Mostly Sunny

Saturday 61/37  
Mostly Sunny

Sunday 60/37  
Partly Sunny

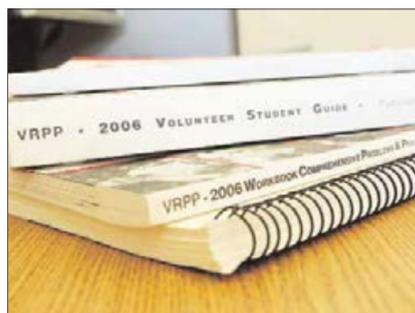
### Inside this issue

• A6: 3/4 Marines pay final respect to fallen warrior

• A11: 1/2 engineers clear way for Mojave Viper training

• A12: Marine walks new beat

### Observations



DUI's on the rise

### This Day in Marine Corps History

— 1856 —

Marines repulse an Indian attack on Seattle.



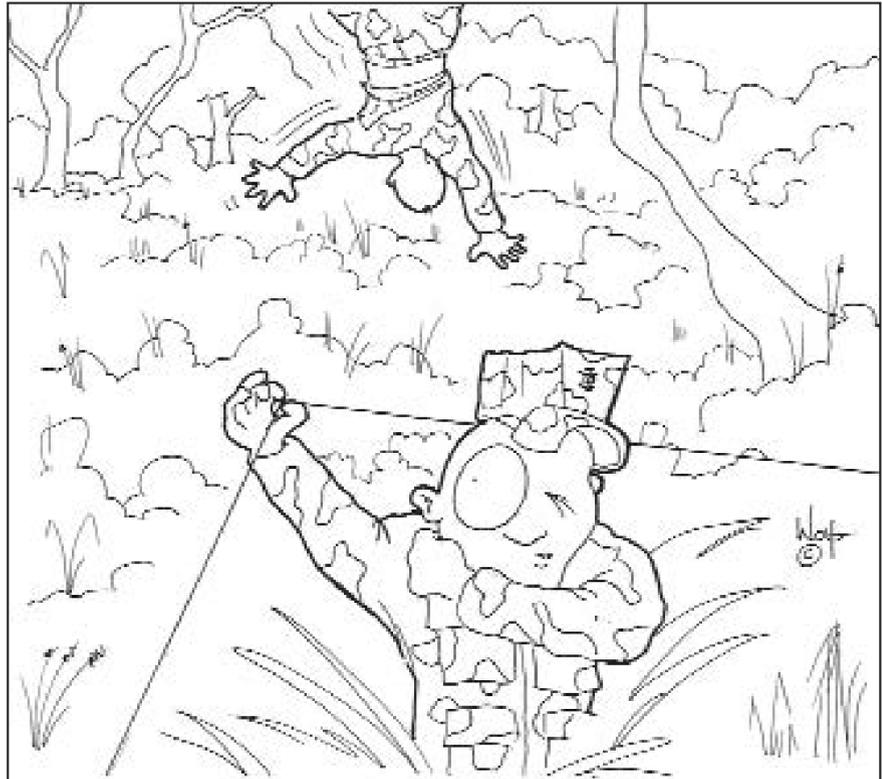
COURTESY PHOTO

### And the winner is...

Petty Officer 3rd Class Eddie Valencia, his wife, Beverly, and daughter, Bernice, pose for a photo after receiving a \$2,500 check from C. Loyd Johnson Co., district manager Dave Harkins for winning Calvin Klein's "Euphoria for Men" sweepstakes Jan. 11 at the Marine Corps Exchange.

## Sempertoons

By Gunnery Sgt. Charles Wolf



"That's funny..., nothing happened?"

## C.O.P. Corner



### Community Oriented Policing

The proactive voice of crime prevention



Presented by the Provost Marshal's Office Crime Prevention Section

### Does your child know what to do when he or she encounters a stranger?

It is time for the new school year to begin, and some parents may choose to let their children walk to school.

Per Combat Center Order 1755.1, children 10 years of age and older can walk to school without parent supervision. Here are some tips to talk to your child about when they see, or are approached by a stranger:

- Don't accept anything from a stranger.
- Don't agree to anything suggested by a stranger.
- If a person makes you feel uncomfortable, walk away.
- Don't talk to strangers; they may not be telling the truth.
- Never accept a ride, or go anywhere with a stranger.
- Shout "NO!" and get away quickly. Be sure to have a designated safe haven picked out for your child to run to along their route.
- Tell a trusted adult, or if an adult is not present, call 9-1-1 or "0" for operator.
- Don't hang up until you are told to do so; listen for instructions.
- Remember what the person looked like and what the person was wearing.

For more information visit website: <http://www.lawtonpd.com>

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

Presented by the Provost Marshal's Office Crime Prevention Section

## Every Marine into the fight, Commandants intent

ALMAR 002/07

Subject: Every Marine into the fight — Commandant's Intent

Purpose to provide deployment and assignment guidance in support of current combat operations.

2. Background/intent
  - A. The Marine Corps remains actively engaged in combat operations in the central command area of responsibility. Marines, by their performance in Iraq and Afghanistan, have added notably to the legacy of our colors. Frequent deployments and short dwell periods have been the norm, yet our Marines have responded magnificently with unwavering determination and commitment to win the long war from the very outset. When they join our Corps, Marines expect to train, deploy and fight. That's who we are; that's what we do; and we must allow every Marine that opportunity.
  - B. As our Corps postures for the long war, and in order to help meet the challenges of frequent deployments, I want our Corps' leadership to initiate policies to ensure all Marines, first termers and career Marines alike, are provided the ability to deploy to a combat zone.
3. Action
  - A. CMC (DC M&RA). Review current personnel assignment policies to ensure maximum assignment flexibility with an orientation towards getting all Marines to the fight. Specifically,
    - (1) As feasible, reassign Marines that have yet to deploy to rotational units, but limit the impact on unit cohesion.
    - (2) Increased time-on-station waivers are authorized in order to effectively redistribute Marines affected by this guidance.
    - (3) As required, modify the III MEF assignment policy.
  - B. Commanders
    - (1) Review internal command assignments to identify Marines who have not yet deployed to a combat zone and facilitate their reassignment to rotational units.
    - (2) Coordinate, as necessary, with CMC (M&RA) to ensure deployment assignment equity among all marines.
    - (3) Support a Marines request to deploy.
4. Coordinating instructions
  - A. This Almar applies to the total force Marine Corps.
  - B. Ensure all Marines are cognizant of my intent.
5. Semper Fidelis, James T. Conway, General, U.S. Marine Corps, Commandant of the Marine Corps

## 16th Sergeant Major of Marine Corps named

WASHINGTON – Sgt. Maj. Carlton W. Kent was named as the next Sergeant Major of the Marine Corps by Commandant of the Marine Corps Gen. James T. Conway during a command visit to Camp Pendleton, Calif., Jan. 19.

Kent, who was the I Marine Expeditionary Force sergeant major, will become the 16th Sergeant Major of the Marine Corps, succeeding Sgt. Maj. John L. Estrada who has held the position since June 2003.

**ARRIVE ALIVE**  
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Top's Taxi 361-6748

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

## Centerspeak

### "What will you do with your tax return this year?"

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



STAFF SGT. ERIC HILLIS  
COMPANY F, 2/7



LANCE CPL. BRANDON HUFF  
COMPANY I, 3/7



PFC. DREW KOLOC  
COMPANY I, 3/7

"Put it into savings."

"I'm going to invest in a mutual fund."

"I'm getting out in a year, so I'm going to save up for a house."

## What's on your mind?

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

Call Cpl. Evan M. Eagan at 830-6213

Or e-mail to: [evan.eagan@usmc.mil](mailto:evan.eagan@usmc.mil)

## OBSERVATION POST

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## HOT TOPICS

### TAX CENTER OPEN

Tax Center hours Monday - Friday 8 a.m. -3:30 p.m.  
 Appointments are recommended. To schedule, call 830-4829.  
 Please bring in the following documents at the time of your appointment:

- All W-2's for yourself and spouse.
- Bank interest or dividend statements.
- Social security cards for everyone on return.
- Proof of your bank account, either MyPay bank printout or blank check, for direct deposit.
- Original power of attorney, if applicable.
- Prior year tax return.

No rental property or self-employment returns are prepared at the Tax Center. Itemized deductions begin Feb. 15. Please make arrangements for child care.

### PHELPS HALL CLOSING

Phelps Hall will be closed through Feb. 4 in order to remove and replace the linoleum mess deck. Littleton Hall will be open in order to support the Combat Center's feeding mission during the closure.

Littleton Hall's hours of operation are as follows:

#### Weekdays

Breakfast	5:30 – 8 a.m.
Lunch	10:30 a.m. – 1 p.m.
Dinner	4 - 6 p.m.
Takeout	5:30 a.m. - 6 p.m.

#### Weekends

Breakfast Brunch	8 a.m. -11 p.m.
Dinner Brunch	3 - 6 p.m.
Takeout	Closed

The Points of contact are Capt. Knowles at 830-6822 or Chief Warrant Officer 2 Tidwell at 830-7017.

## LEISURE ITEMS

### WEDNESDAY STEAK NIGHTS AT THE OFFICERS' CLUB

The Officers' Club will have Wednesday Steak Nights from 5 - 7 p.m. Attendees will enjoy a grilled to order steak, baked potato, Texas toast, and salad. Prices are \$9.75 for members and \$10.75 for non-members. Reservations are requested no later than the Monday before. Call 830-6610 for details and reservations.

### SUPER BOWL XLI PARTY

The Officers' Club, the Staff NCO Club, the NCO Club and the Enlisted Club will each host a Super Bowl XLI Party Feb. 4 beginning at 2 p.m. There will be prize drawings including a TV as the Grand Prize. The Bud Girls will also be at each club for one quarter of the game. Call your club for more details.

### SMP MEDIEVAL TIMES TRIP

The Single Marine Program is hosting a Medieval Times trip tomorrow departing the Zone at 10 a.m. The cost is \$40 which includes transportation and a delicious meal. Come and join us for a step back in time with castles, maidens and jousting. It promises to be a night to remember. For more information, call 830-4767.

## 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\*  
**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

# Marine squad leader dedicates himself to fellow 'grunts,' chooses Iraq over home

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

HUSAYBAH, Iraq – Two words Marines here use to describe Cpl. Jason Getty's recent decision to extend his current enlistment to stay in Iraq are commitment and dedication.

Getty's service in the Marine Corps ends Jan. 27, but he won't be getting out. He chose

to extend his service just long enough to finish what he's currently doing – a seven-month tour in Iraq.

"I had to be here with my boys," said Getty during a frigid, three-hour night patrol in Husaybah, a city that shares a border with Syria in northwestern Iraq.

The Lakeview, Ore., native made the decision long before his deployment to Iraq's Al Anbar Province

began in September.

"Getty made this decision for the love of his Marines," said 1st Sgt. Robert M. Sands, a Baltimore native and the senior enlisted Marine in Getty's company. "It's pretty honorable and a good example of a leader."

Getty is serving as a squad leader with a platoon in Kilo Company, 3rd Battalion, 4th Marine Regiment, a southern Calif.-based battalion. The company is currently posted in a U.S. Marine outpost in Husaybah, arguably the busiest city in the battalion's area of operation, say Marines here. The city has a local populace of 50,000, predominantly Sunni.

Daily life for Getty and his Marines means patrolling the city's streets, fully loaded with protective equipment, weapons and communication gear. The Market Street is one of their most popular routes for patrol, said Getty.

Even though the Marines must hold traffic as they pass through, the vendors seem to have no problem with the Marines' presence.

At times, Getty shakes hands with locals and greets them in Arabic. Most Iraqis respond in broken English with a "hello, mister," or "no problem," as Marines pass them by.

"Sometimes we're looked highly upon," said Getty. "They know why we're here and what we do. This country has been in dictatorship for a long time. I'm sure the people in this city appreciate what we're doing for them."

As a corporal and a squad

leader of roughly 12 Marines, Getty has to "carry the torch," he said. The 21-year-old is making very important decisions and plans, from managing military equipment and vehicles, planning patrol routes and looking out for his troops' welfare.

"I am doing whatever it takes to make sure all my boys go home safe," said Getty, reasoning his choice to go on the deployment.

Just last year, Husaybah was the original battle grounds of Operation Steel Curtain, a 16-day-long battle between Coalition forces and insurgents in this northern Euphrates River region. The battle resulted in the ousting of insurgents from the area.

Today, Getty, his squad and the rest of Kilo Company are maintaining Husaybah's security by walking the beat alongside its one-year-old Iraqi police force and a fully equipped and trained Iraqi Army battalion. The company is tasked with mentoring local Iraqi security forces, imparting with them essential military tactics they will need in order to man the country on their own.

Long days and nights have paid off for U.S. and Iraqi troops here – they're finding weapons caches and improvised explosive devices, as well as capturing insurgents.

Recently, the company found an IED in the region and destroyed it. Just three days later, they found a weapons and ordnance cache in the same area.

Getty had the choice to remain behind in Twentynine Palms, Calif. – the battalion's home station – as his fellow Marines deployed, just like most Marines who are slated to leave the service during a deployment period.

But that was an option he had to refuse, he said. He feels risking his life in Iraq for another four more months is worth the reward – ensuring his Marines are well-led and trained, and ultimately, come home alive, he said.

"I wanted to be here so I can teach these guys what I was taught on my first deployment," said Getty, regarding his "on the job training" during combat operations in previous deployments. "I want to make sure they do things the right way... the way I was taught."

Most of the people in Getty's squad are serving their first deployment to Iraq. The training Getty imparts with them may save their lives and one day they will pass it on to other Marines, said Getty.

Even though there is very little talking during their patrols, the Marines in Getty's squad look toward his position in the formation whenever they're unsure of something – for instance, a civilian wanting to pass through their formation so they can go home or children who follow the patrol.

Immediately, Getty responds to these situations by telling the Marine what they should say or do and why.

"By the time the deployment is over, I don't want my guys to have any single question on their mind," said Getty. "I want them to learn and know everything about [combat operations] out here, because I won't be around after this one."

Nonetheless, there's an ambience of confidence as Getty and his Marines make their rounds through Husaybah's dirt roads. The Marines are confident when searching homes or vehicles and the civilians know to stay away when Marines are conducting patrols. Even though the Marines shake hands and hand out candy to the children, the children know not to follow them.

"It's quiet. This is the way I wanted my last deployment to go," said Getty.

"Cpl. Getty is always there for us, always takes care of us and always sticks up for us," said Getty's fellow squad member, Lance Cpl. Maverick Moreland, a 21-year-old from San Antonio. "I feel confident patrolling with Cpl. Getty as our squad leader. Between him

and Reeves, our squad is in good hands."

Moreland referred to another fellow squad member as a great leader who is currently also serving his third tour in Iraq – Lance Cpl. Daniel Reeves.

And just like Getty, Reeves is slated to end his service in the Corps before the end of the deployment. He too chose to extend his service for this tour.

"I came over twice already, and I felt it would benefit these Marines if I came again for this one," said Reeves. "Just as I thought I would, I'm helping these guys day-by-day become a good squad."

Moreland said Reeves and Getty are great examples to follow, and if the situation ever arose where he would have to extend his service for a deployment, he "most definitely would."

As Reeves and Getty approach their end of active duty service date, they are looking forward more to the plane ride home with everyone they came with, they said.

"I share a lot of memories with these guys," said Getty. "When I joined, I would never imagined to live through the experiences I have and be so committed to a group of... flesh and blood; humans. I became attached."

The friendships Getty developed over the course of his four-year enlistment are one of the toughest things he said he'll be giving up after the end of his journey in Corps. Nonetheless, he and Reeves have more than three months to prepare to depart the service honorably.

While Reeves is looking into furthering his education by attending college, Getty has plans to join a police force in Oregon. And as two single Marines, they both agree that their choices are broad when they get out.

But their focus is on the remainder of the deployment.

"I love what I did and where I'm at," said Getty. "I have no regrets."



CPL. MICHAEL S. CIFUENTES

Cpl. Jason Getty, a 21-year-old Lakeview, Ore., native, patrols alongside an Iraqi policeman Dec. 16, 2006 in Husaybah, Iraq, a city that lies on the border of Iraq and Syria.



# 3/4 Marines pay final respect to fallen friend, mentor, a 'Top' Marine in Iraq's Al Anbar province

STORY BY CPL. MICHAEL S. CIFUENTES

3RD BATTALION, 4TH MARINE REGIMENT

AL QA'IM, Iraq – Marines serving in northwestern Anbar Province honored the life of Master Sgt. Brian P. McNulty during a memorial service Dec. 17, at a Marine base in Al Qa'im, Iraq.

McNulty, a Vicksburg, Miss., native, died Dec. 11 when the CH-53E helicopter he was riding in crashed just after takeoff several miles away from the Iraq-Syria border.

Known as "Top" to his fellow Marines, McNulty was the operations chief for Weapons



STAFF SGT. CHRISTOPHER J. GIELAROWSKI

A memorial for Master Sgt. Brian P. McNulty is displayed at his memorial service Dec. 17, in Al Qa'im, Iraq.

Company, 3rd Battalion, 4th Marine Regiment, a battalion based out of Twentynine Palms, Calif.

He was four months into a seven-month deployment when he died.

Marines and sailors gathered in front of the battalion's command post to reminisce about the life of McNulty, a knowledgeable Marine who was a mentor to his subordinate Marines and long-term friend to others.

The Marines massed in a military formation in front of a memorial for McNulty – a Kevlar helmet set atop a rifle stuck bayonet-first into a sand bag. Hung from the pistol grip of the rifle were McNulty's dog tags. His combat boots were set in front of the rifle; a portrait of the 39-year-old man with "an infectious smile" was displayed behind the memorial.

"Master Sergeant McNulty was full of energy and enthusiasm for his job," said Lt. Col. Scott C. Shuster, the battalion's commanding officer, during the service. "He had the type of personality and style that made you want to be around him."

As operations chief for a company of more than 140 Marines, McNulty was tasked with coordinating movements, logistics and

training in order to ensure all combat operations with his company were successfully completed.

Above all, he was specifically focused on training Marines for combat operations and weapons usage, said Chief Warrant Officer 2 John D. Whiting, the battalion gunner.

"Top always had time for everybody. No matter what he was doing, he always acknowledged [a Marine's] presence – no matter what rank," said Whiting.

McNulty was described as a "magnet who drew people to him," and was greatly known for his conversations. He was described as "the party" by a fellow senior enlisted Marine. From his stories of his days on Marine Security Guard duty to the jokes he told during "smoke breaks," he had the ability to draw people to talk to him and "make you laugh and smile on the worst of days," said Marines who knew him well.

"It only took one conversation with him and you were tied to him forever," said 1st Sgt. Robert J. Mims, senior enlisted advisor for the battalion's Headquarters and Service Company. "He was a unique person that you could not help going over to him whenever you saw him. He always left you better than he found you."

As a 19-year Marine Corps veteran, McNulty traveled to many countries during Marine Security Guard duty that included postings to U.S. embassies in Paraguay, South Korea, Hungary, Burundi and Colombia. He also served aboard the U.S.S. John



STAFF SGT. CHRISTOPHER J. GIELAROWSKI

Marines with 3rd Battalion, 4th Marine Regiment, stand at attention behind the memorial of Master Sgt. Brian P. McNulty as "Taps" plays during McNulty's memorial service Dec. 17, at a Marine base in Al Qa'im, Iraq.

F. Kennedy and did a combat deployment to the Persian Gulf during Operation Desert Storm.

"For those of us privileged to serve with Master Sgt. Brian P. McNulty, our lives are richer because we are the beneficiaries of his love for country and Corps, his passion for life, love for his Marines, and his dedication to his mission," said

U.S. Navy Lt. Alan Rogers, the battalion's chaplain.

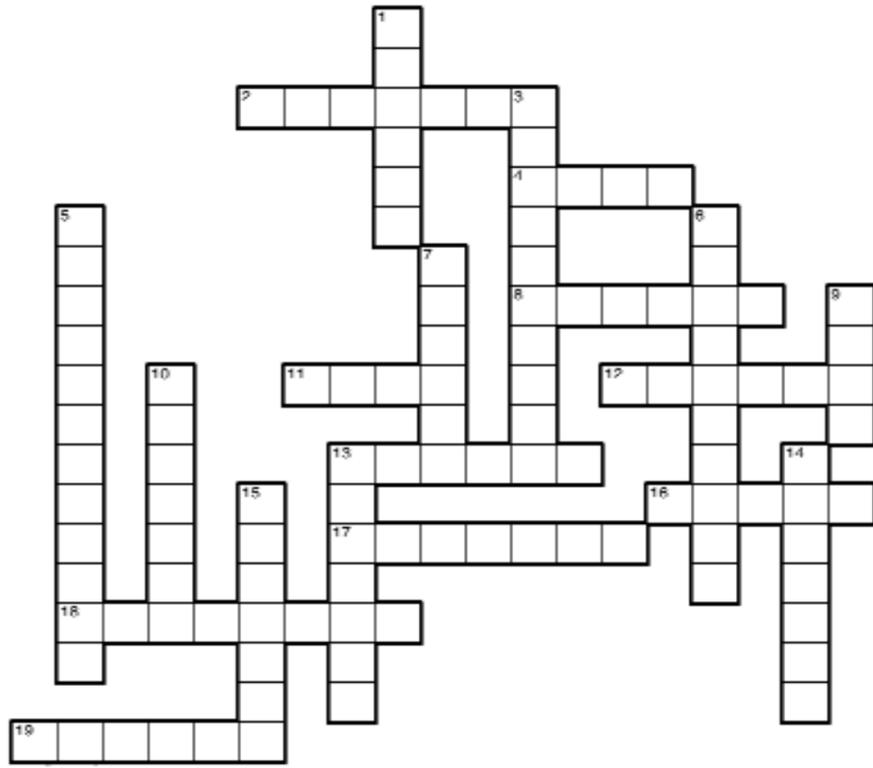
At the end of the service, Marines and sailors individually said goodbye to "Top" McNulty by standing front and centered to the memorial – some kneeled, and placed their hands on his Kevlar helmet in silent prayer. Others gripped his dog tags in their hands.

"Our hearts and souls are

heavy today and we will never forget," said Mims as he said his final goodbye. "Master Sgt. Brian Patrick McNulty, my friend, my brother, you rest in peace now, for we will continue the fight."

McNulty is the second U.S. servicemember from 3rd Battalion to have died in this region since the battalion arrived in September.

# STAR TREK TRIVIA



## ACROSS

1. Klingon ship
3. Inhabitable planet
9. Warrior race
10. Enterprise captain
11. Race of money-grubbers
14. Ship's doctor
15. The only child bridge officer
17. Transporter alternative
19. Ship's engineer
20. The only Klingon on the

## DOWN

2. Enemy to the Klingons
4. Mr. Laforge
5. Number One
6. The big ship
7. Enemy to the Romulans
8. Star Trek weapon
12. Dr. Crusher's first name
13. Star Trek's torpedo
16. The android
18. Ship's counselor

Enterprise

[Solutions on A5]

## Birth announcements



**Joshua Patrick Brink**  
 Son of Patrick and Shannon Brink  
 Born Jan. 12, weighing 9 lbs. 1 oz.  
 and measuring 19.75 inches.



LANCE CPL. KATELYN A. KNAUER

Inside the simulator is a replica of a humvee. The simulator involves all aspects of a convoy, and requires full participation from all passengers. With the 360 degree screen it allows the Marines to experience real-life combat scenarios.

### SIMULATOR from A1

an hour to complete and we train anywhere from 300 to 350 Marines a week."

The simulators also offer the unit commanders a chance to test their Marines on what they think the unit needs to work on most. It also allows them to increase and decrease the stress level with the different things the Marines can experience.

"What happens is there are basic things in each scenario and we have the capability to add things as the Marines go through each scenario. So, if they react to something a certain way, we can alter a scenario based on their reactions to certain things," said Viramontes.

Unlike a video game, the convoy simulator is not a joke and is not to be taken as one. It presents Marines with real life situations and can save lives in country if taken seriously.

"In these scenarios, they can see civilians, enemies with

weapons, children, women, dead animals on the road, they can call for helicopter support they can call for fixed wing support, and call for EOD" said Viramontes. "It tests their decision making skills and helps them practice their immediate action drills."

When units are finished with training, they conduct an after-action report on what went well throughout the training. Along with the AAR, the simulator allows the scenarios to be played back so they can discuss what they did wrong during the simulation training.

"We generally have an extremely good response back from the Marines," said Viramontes. "What usually takes months to plan in live training, we can do in five minutes here."

If units are interested in convoy simulator training, they can contact Staff Sgt. Viramontes at (323) 707-7658 for more information or to schedule a time for training.

### MOH from A1

Bush said Jason represented the best of young Americans.

The room came to attention as the president took his position beside the mother. The narrator began reciting: "The President of the United States, in the name of the Congress, takes pride in presenting the Medal of Honor posthumously to ..."

Hearing her son's name, Deb's body began wrenching slightly, apparently trying to contain her emotions. With a tearful president at her left and Dan at her right, Deb held their hands throughout the citation - or they held hers. Dan and Deb's three children stood behind them.

The citation went on: "By his undaunted courage, intrepid fighting spirit, and unwavering devotion to duty, Cpl. Dunham gallantly gave his life for his country ..."

With the citation given, Bush presented the encased

medal to the family.

Acknowledging all service members afterward, the father said "Their names are all attached to this medal. They're all courageous. They all have valor. It's something that I want them all to know: They're part of this medal. It's as much theirs as it is Jason's."

Wall Street Journal reporter Michael M. Phillips, who covered the war in Iraq alongside Dunham's unit, also attended the ceremony. Phillips first introduced Dunham's story to a mass audience with a front-page article published May 25, 2004. He later wrote the unabridged story in "The Gift of Valor: A War Story," which narrates Jason's life and death, from growing up in Scio, to giving his life in service to country, to an eight-day journey home battling his wounds.

On April 14, 2004, in Iraq near the Syrian border, the corporal used his helmet and his body to smother an exploding

Mills Bomb let loose by a raging insurgent whom Dunham and two other Marines tried to subdue.

The explosion dazed and wounded Lance Cpl. William Hampton and Pfc. Kelly Miller. The insurgent stood up after the blast and was immediately killed by Marine small-arms fire.

After the grenade exploded under Dunham's helmet, he lay face down with a few tiny pieces of shrapnel lodged in his head. The hard, molded mesh that was his Kevlar helmet was now scattered yards around into clods and shredded fabric. Dunham never regained consciousness and died eight days later at the National Naval Medical Center in Bethesda, Md., with his mother and father at his bedside. He was 22.

Dunham, buried in Scio, is the second warrior and first Marine to earn the medal since the war in Iraq began. On April 4, 2003,



STAFF SGT. SCOTT DUNN

Parents Deb and Dan Dunham visit their son's grave Nov. 3 at Fairlawn Cemetery in Scio, NY.

during Operation Iraqi Freedom, Army Sgt. 1st Class Paul R. Smith posthumously earned the medal for organizing a defense that held off a company-sized

attack on more than 100 vulnerable coalition soldiers.

In the defense, Smith manned a .50 caliber machine gun in an exposed position until he was mortally wounded.

Before Dunham, the last Marine actions to earn the medal happened May 8, 1970, in Vietnam, according to Marine Corps History Division records. A Medal of Honor citation details Lance Cpl. Miguel Keith's machine-gun charge that inspired a platoon facing nearly overwhelming odds: Wounded, Keith ran into "fire-swept terrain." Wounded again by a grenade, he still attacked, taking out enemies in the forward rush.

Keith fought until mortally wounded; his platoon came out on top despite being heavily outnumbered.

The last Marine to receive the Medal of Honor was Maj. Gen. James L. Day, who distinguished himself as a corporal in the Battle of Okinawa in 1945. On Jan. 20, 1998, more than half a century later, President Bill Clinton presented the medal to Day, who passed away that year.

# Anheuser-Busch Entertainment extends military tribute

## BUSCH ENTERTAINMENT CORPORATION

PRESS RELEASE

ST. LOUIS, Mo. – A tribute program that so far has provided free admission to Anheuser-Busch theme parks for more than 1.7 million members of U.S. and coalition armed forces and their families has been extended through 2007. Anheuser-Busch launched “Here’s to the Heroes” in February 2005 to acknowledge the service of military men and women and the sacrifices made by their families.

“It is gratifying to all of us at Anheuser-Busch that so many members of our armed forces took advantage of this program and honored us with a visit,” said Keith M. Kasen, chairman and president of Busch Entertainment Corporation, the family entertainment division of Anheuser-Busch. “This is a difficult time for our men and women in uniform, and we are honored to give them something back.”

Here’s to the Heroes provides a single day’s free admission to any SeaWorld or Busch Gardens park, Sesame Place, Adventure Island or Water Country USA for the service member and as many as three of their dependents.

Any active duty, active reserve, ready reserve service member or National Guardsman is entitled to free admission under the program. He or she need only register, either online at [www.herosalute.com](http://www.herosalute.com) or in the entrance plaza of a participating park, and show a Department of Defense photo ID. Also included in the offer are members of foreign military forces serving in the coalitions in Iraq or Afghanistan or attached to American units in the U.S. for training.

“This is one small way we can acknowledge and thank the soldiers, sailors, Marines, airmen and Coast Guardsmen whose service helps to preserve the freedom and safety of every American,” Kasen said. “It’s important to all of us at Anheuser-Busch that we show our gratitude to the men and women of our armed forces and their families for the sacrifices they make on our behalf.”

Here’s to the Heroes is the fourth tribute to military per-

sonnel offered by Anheuser-Busch since Yellow Ribbon Summer welcomed service members home from the Gulf War in 1991. More than 4 million people have visited Anheuser-Busch Adventure Parks free under

these programs.

Three Anheuser-Busch parks – SeaWorld Orlando, Busch Gardens Tampa Bay and SeaWorld San Diego – operate year round. The company’s remaining parks are seasonal, with varying

opening dates this spring.

Inactive, standby and retired reserve members, military retirees, Merchant Marine and civilian Department of Defense workers are ineligible for the program.

Anheuser-Busch operates nine U.S. theme parks: Busch Gardens Tampa Bay and Busch Gardens Williamsburg; SeaWorld Orlando, SeaWorld San Diego and SeaWorld San Antonio; Discovery Cove in

Orlando; Sesame Place near Philadelphia; Water Country USA in Williamsburg and Adventure Island in Tampa. Anheuser-Busch Adventure Parks play host to more than 20 million guests each year.

# Corps leaders: Stars not to be worn with OIF, OEF medals

LANCE CPL. BRYAN A. PETERSON  
MCB CAMP BUTLER

CAMP FOSTER, OKINAWA, Japan — During recent visits to stateside

installations, two top Marine leaders repeatedly fielded questions about whether or not star devices are authorized for wear on Iraq and Afghanistan Campaign Medals to mark

multiple tours, Marine officials said recently. Gen. James T. Conway, commandant of the Marine Corps, and Sgt. Maj. John L. Estrada, the sergeant major of the Marine Corps, are encour-

aging leaders to clarify the issue among Marines. Marine Administrative Messages 172/05 and 173/05 address the wear of the Iraq Campaign Medal and the Afghanistan Campaign Medal

respectively. Both messages state stars are not authorized for either medal. Marine Administrative Message 172/05 for the Iraq Campaign Medal states Marines must have partici-

pated in direct support of Operation Iraqi Freedom since March 19, 2003. Iraq's area of eligibility encompasses all land and airspace within the country to include a contiguous water area out to 12 nautical miles.

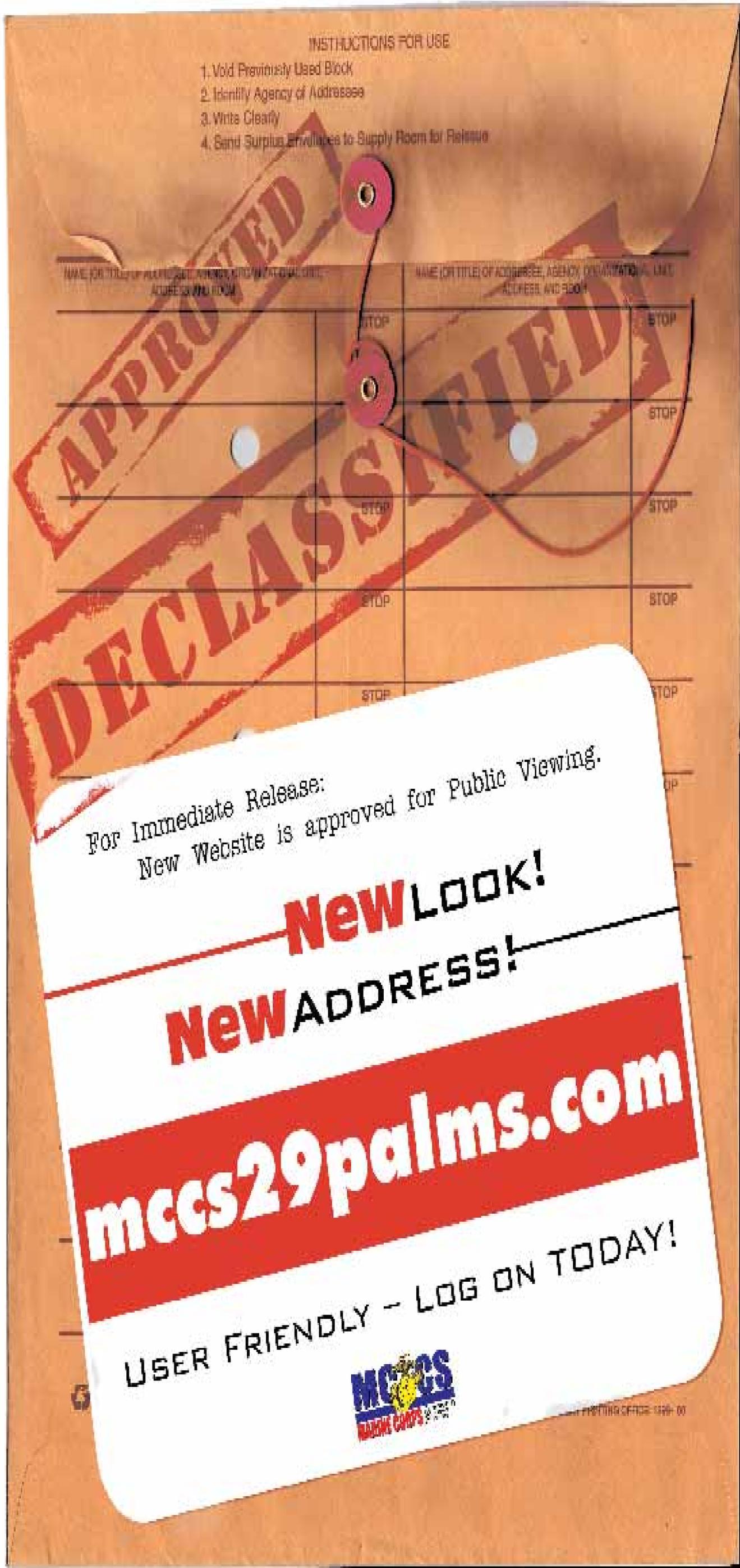
Marines must be assigned, attached or mobilized to a unit operating in the area of eligibility for 30 consecutive days or 60 non-consecutive days in order to receive the medal, with few exceptions.

MARADMIN 173/05 for the Afghanistan Campaign Medal states Marines must have participated in direct support of Operation Enduring Freedom since Oct. 24, 2001. Afghanistan's area of eligibility encompasses all land area and airspace within the country. Marines must be assigned, attached or mobilized to a unit operating in the area of eligibility for 30 consecutive days or 60 non-consecutive days in order to receive the medals, with few exceptions as well.

Sgt. Maj. Robert E. Mastriano, the sergeant major of Marine Corps Bases Japan, said a Marine who deployed to Iraq or Afghanistan for the first time is authorized to wear the same award as a Marine who has deployed to the same campaign more than once.

"Marines want to be recognized for how many times they have deployed to Iraq and Afghanistan," Mastriano said. "Currently, there is no provision that denotes subsequent tours to Iraq and Afghanistan."

For service stars to be a part of the Iraq and Afghanistan Campaign Medals for Marines, the Headquarters Marine Corps Military Awards Branch must approve the change, he said. For more information about eligibility and requirements for the medals, visit <http://www.usmc.mil> and click on the MARADMINS link or contact their personnel and administration office.



# 1/2 engineers take Marines outside the wire, clear way for Mojave Viper training

LANCE CPL. RYAN C. HEISER

REGIMENTAL COMBAT TEAM 2

Lance Cpl. Keith Shaffer watches nervously as the valley around him turns into orchestrated chaos. He kneels, alert, behind a bush as his squad screams at each other and gives cover fire. Shaffer sees the signal and dashes forward ahead of all the others in the deep trench, twirling a grappling hook over his head. Finally he dives, head-first, releasing the hook, sending it sailing over the rock bed in front of him. The short figure slowly begins reeling the rope back while still lying face down in the dirt.

Shaffer, a combat engineer with Company A, 1st Battalion, 2nd Marine Regiment, Regimental Combat Team 2 clears a simulated mine field and gives the signal that all is clear. The platoon quickly proceeds toward their objective.

The company kicked off their Mojave Viper training with squad assaults here in the Mojave Desert. Mojave Viper is the name given to the month-long pre-deployment training given to Marines who are deploying to Iraq. The desert provides Marines with realistic simulations of experiences they will encounter on their upcoming deployment in March.

The training imitated a realistic assault through several trenches and bunkers filled with pop-up dummies to imitate insurgents. The platoon started in a deep trench at the bottom of a hill, and gradually they attacked upward until they encountered an imitation minefield and wire barricade. This is where the engineers



LANCE CPL. RYAN C. HEISER

Lance Cpl. Keith Shaffer, a combat engineer with Company A, 1st Battalion, 2nd Marine Regiment, twirls a grappling hook as he clears a simulated minefield during the company's first training exercise at Mojave Viper Jan. 9.

began to take care of business.

"This is what they train for, it (training) doesn't get any more realistic than this" 1st Sgt. Anthony Cruz, the company's first sergeant, explained as one of the engineers rushed past Shaffer to lay a long wood-

en board across a concertina wire, or c-wire, barrier.

After the engineers cleared the minefield and wire, the platoon spilled into an open area and began to spread out and fire on insurgent entrenchments. As each round found its mark, they slowly climbed the hill.

The training came to a close as the Marines split up in order to overtake three reinforced trenches and clear all of the pop-up targets. One squad climbed a nearby hill to provide cover fire as the other two squads separated, and surrounded the target. A final assault from rifles, squad automatic weapons, and M240-G machine guns ended the training exercise.

Combat engineers do much more than clear obstacles; they are also responsible for demolition and fabrication of combat structures.

"We also do trade work, benches or shelves in exchange for stuff like equipment or other things," said the Vancouver, Wash., native.

Shaffer says this type of exchange is essential to improving morale and building teamwork within a unit. The trade work also provides small comforts for troops who

spend up to 12 months several thousand miles from home.

At the end of the training, the Marines gather their gear and begin to pack up; looking forward to the next training

they will have before their deployment. The engineers gather their ropes and boards and start to walk down the hill, struggling with the weight of their gear. Only a few moments

pass before three Marines rush over and begin to help.

"Teamwork is essential because every job we do can't be done by one single person," Shaffer said.



LANCE CPL. RYAN C. HEISER

Marines with Company A, 1st Battalion, 2nd Marine Regiment, carefully navigate through a trench during the company's first training exercise at Mojave Viper.

# Marine turns in rank for badge

LANCE CPL. NICOLE A. LAVINE

COMBAT CORRESPONDENT

After serving more than 30 years in a career that took him from enlisted to field grade officer, Col. Geoffrey L. Cooper retired today.

On Thursday, Cooper relinquished his command of the Mojave Viper Support detachment to Col. Ronald H. Anderson.

Although Cooper, a reservist and native of Aurora, Ill., has spent more than three decades in the country's most elite and demanding fighting force, his demeanor is one of an approachable and experienced man willing to give anyone the benefit of the doubt.

Cooper, who has a bachelor's degree in criminal justice, said after his official resignation May 1, he plans on serving as a Deputy Sheriff in San Bernardino County, a job he held prior to being activated in 2003.

"It brings me satisfaction to serve the public, have camaraderie with the other sheriffs, and put the bad guys in jail," said Cooper about his up-coming career as Deputy Sheriff.

Cooper enlisted in the Marine Corps and attended boot camp at Marine Corps Recruit Depot San Diego in November 1973.

After a three-year enlistment, he moved on to Military Police school in Gordon, Ga. After graduating in January 1974, Cooper was sent to carry out duties at Marine Corps Base Quantico, Va.

He was discharged in August 1976, and attended St. Cloud State University in Minnesota. Upon graduation, he was commissioned as a second lieutenant in 1980 through the Platoon Leaders Class.

Cooper was assigned as commanding officer of Company B, 3rd Light Armored Vehicle Battalion based at Marine Corps Base Camp Pendleton, Calif., in August 1986.

He then spent the next four years serving as the operations officer for Headquarters Battalion, 3rd Marine Division, and then as the commanding officer of Headquarters Battalion, 4th Marine Regiment, in Okinawa, Japan.

While serving with Tactical Training Exercise Control Group from November 1992 to December 2002, Cooper was the maneuver representative for the infantry, light armored vehicle and head Individual Mobilization Detachment representative for more than 75 combined arms exercises.

Upon Cooper's activation in January 2003, he deployed overseas with 1st

Marine Division twice between February 2003 and February 2004.

Cooper's awards include: the Navy Marine Corps Medal, the Bronze Star Medal, two Meritorious Service Medals, two Navy Achievement Medals, the Combat Action Ribbon, the Presidential Unit Commendation, and a Good Conduct Medal.

Anderson, a fellow reservist who also served in the police force in Austin, Texas, prior to activation, said there were only five Headquarters personnel working for Mojave Viper during his time as Officer Conducting Exercise for II MEF in 2005. After Anderson's return this year, he said due to Cooper's hard work and influence, that number is now up to 244 headquarters personnel.

"Colonel Cooper has really built on what I left," said Anderson. "He built a great institution basically from nothing."

Although some may consider 33 years of service enough to retire with a clear conscience, Cooper's sense of duty and dedication has driven him to yet another form of service, and another piece of his life.

"After seeing the progression of the Corps in the last 30 years, I have no problem leaving it for the younger generation to carry on," said Cooper.



LANCE CPL. NICOLE A. LAVINE

Col. Geoffrey L. Cooper stands outside his hooch at Camp Wilson Tuesday.

# OBSERVATIONS

JAN. 26, 2007

## Making it work

# Changing your PT habits

JOHN SNOWDEN

MARINE CORPS COMMUNITY SERVICES

Do you need to shed that extra holiday weight? Do you want more energy throughout the day? Or, maybe you just want to start living that healthy lifestyle your doctor's been telling you about. Then it's time, as you probably already know, to start eating right and working out!

We are happy to say that Marine Corps Community Services has all the facilities, programs, resources and personal expertise to help you achieve and maintain your fitness goals. This is all brought to you through Semper Fit, the program of programs for sports, recreation and fitness aboard the Combat Center. Lose weight, build muscle and increase energy with an abundance of exercise resources and programs all for you and all free.

There are four Gyms on base: the East and West Gym, the Community Center, and the Camp Wilson Fitness Center. The East and West Gyms are located at opposite ends of the main side area of base; the Community Center can be found across from the Home Store, by the Family Pool; while the Camp Wilson Fitness Center is out at Camp Wilson. These gyms offer a full array of cardio machines, free weights and lots of sports gear.

Would you like a little personal help with your goals, some one on one, undivided attention? Personal trainers, all certified by the American Counsel on Exercise (ACE), are available for you through Semper Fit, at both the East and West gym.

I spoke with Missy Souza, Lead Personal Trainer at the East Gym, about taking that first step towards getting in shape, or back into shape. Along with her ACE personal trainer certification, Missy also has a B.A. in Physical Education Management, a degree from the Professional Fitness Institute, an ACE

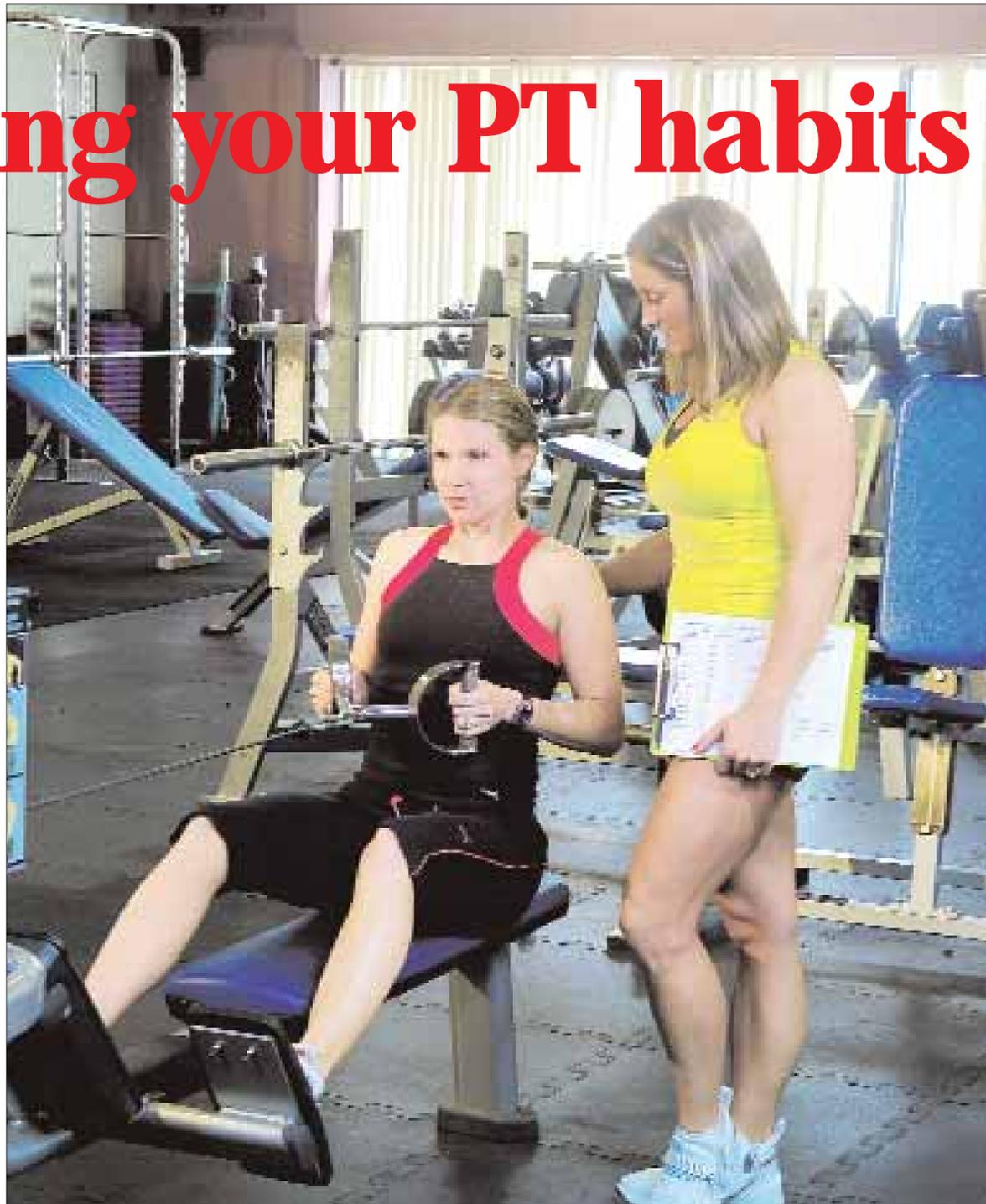
Lifestyle & Weight Management certification and a personal training certification through the National Strength and Conditioning Association.

"The first step to getting a personalized program set up for a patron is to have them fill out a series of 'question and answer' forms that include: a PAR-Q (Physical Activity Readiness Questionnaire), family history form and a physician's clearance. These forms are to help the trainer and client acknowledge any health risk factors, assess their needs and work together to establish goals," stated Missy.

After this brief process, Missy, or any of the other personal trainers that Semper Fit has to offer, performs a fitness assessment on the client to find your base-line fitness level and body composition. The micro-fit assessment measures weight, body fat percentage, bicep strength, back flexibility, and VO2 max, or the ability to sustain cardio-vascular exertion. The trainer will then develop an exercise plan specifically tailored to your needs and guide you through your personalized plan.

The personal trainers will also advise you on any changes in eating habits that may be needed. Does this mean "cutting out all your favorite foods"? Not at all Missy explains, "For most individuals, the largest contributing factor to weight gain is portion sizes. So, when you adopt a healthy lifestyle, you really don't have to 'give up' your favorites. You just need to learn portion control."

For more personal nutrition counseling Lt. Michael Mero, the Naval Hospital's registered dietician, will meet clients at the East Gym to provide professional advice on weight loss, hypertension, diabetes or other special dietary needs. Lt. Mero is available on Wednesdays, around noon and in the early evenings. Call the East Gym at 830-6440 to make an appointment.



East Gym Lead Personal trainer Missy Souza watches Jenny Sokol use the Lateral Row machine.

TERRY MAYES

So whether it's your New Year's resolution or you just want to start feeling and looking good again, please be aware that Marine Corps Community Services is working tirelessly to provide you with what you need: state of the art equipment, classes, personal training and an abundance of information all free of charge. Please stop by the West Gym or the Community Center Monday through Friday, or call them at 830-6541 and 830-3380. The East Gym is open seven days a week, 830-6440. Get started today!



By making time in your daily routine for good PT habits, you too can have guns like Staff Sgt. Christopher A. Colson.

TERRY MAYES

## Spouses treated to night out at Palm Springs Follies



GREG PURDY

More than 30 spouses attended the Palm Springs Follies Jan. 19 as part of a Marine Corps Community Services' Operation Enduring Families trip.

KATHRYN CRANK

MARINE CORPS COMMUNITY SERVICES

For the past three years the Fabulous Palm Springs Follies has welcomed our Combat Center spouses to a one of a kind production and this year was no different. Continuing our Operation Enduring Families tradition, over 30 spouses attended this enjoyable evening out on the town, free of charge including transportation, dinner and a show. Our fortunate spouses had no idea what to expect but the consensus was unanimous, that the evening was a hit!

They were pampered and catered to at The Kaiser Grille Restaurant in beautiful downtown Palm Springs, a top-notch restaurant with incredible, mouth-watering, delectable food. Dinner included Caesar Salad, Chicken Marcela, grilled fresh vegetables, fresh bread with olive oil and for dessert, an amazing chocolate decadence cake.

Then, they were off to an amazing one of a kind show where our spouses

were honored and thanked with a standing ovation for their daily sacrifices. The Fabulous Palm Springs Follies is a world famous, Broadway caliber celebration of the music, dance and comedy of the 30's and 40's. Hosted at the Plaza Theater Movie House, the entertainers perform to a packed house at every performance, up to 10 shows a week, seven months a year. In this special presentation of "Gotta Dance" the audience was wowed by guest star, Gloria Loring, The Dancing Gauchos, and a traditional magic transformation act performed by a husband and wife team.

Marine Corps Community Services would like to personally and publicly acknowledge and thank the Fabulous Palm Springs Fabulous Follies Company and The Kaiser Grille Restaurant for honoring our spouses and treating them to a very special night off. We are truly grateful for your continuous support and graciousness year after year.

Spouses, keep an eye out for the next trip, you won't want to miss out!

# Ready or not 2007 Tax season is here

CPL. REGINA N. ORTIZ  
COMBAT CORRESPONDENT

The Combat Center's Tax Center opened its doors Jan. 22 for this year's tax season to prepare and electronically file tax information to the Internal Revenue Service and states.

The Tax Center's services are offered to active duty military members, retirees and their family members, free of charge, Monday thru Friday from 8 a.m. until 3:30 p.m., at the Village Center at building 1551.

As many are in a rush to receive their refund as quick as possible, the Tax Center is busiest during the first four weeks after opening. Tax payers can call in for an appointment at 830-4829.

If an appointment isn't available soon enough for the taxpayer, they are urged to wait and avoid overpaying tax preparers out in town, said Amy Toryk, Tax Center manager.

A preparer may charge up to \$75 to \$200 for preparing the taxes alone, and for a refund anticipation loan offered by many preparers, tax payers can end up paying more than \$70 to \$225 in bank fees and interest, Toryk explained.

Some individuals may choose to go online and file their taxes on their own. While no misleading or fraudulent sites have been reported, there is a risk involved to take that route. If the tax payer is not familiar with some of the jargon used in tax preparation, they may not understand the question and include false statements or claims in their tax file. The tax payer is held liable for all statements or claims made when electronically filing their taxes, said Toryk.

The Tax Center staff is well trained on preparing taxes and answering questions frequently asked by many tax payers.

They are also knowledgeable about new tax issues this season, like the telephone tax refund. There were federal court decisions recently that have determined that the tax does not apply to long-distance service as it is billed today. The IRS is refunding the portion of the tax charged on long-distance calls. The IRS is also refunding taxes collected on telephone service under plans that do not differentiate between long distance and local calls including bundled service, according to the



Lance Cpl. David Farmer, Combat Logistics Battalion 7, gets his taxes prepared Jan. 25 by Pfc. Brice Laurents, a Tax office clerk at the Tax office in the Village Center.

IRS's official Web site, <http://www.irs.gov>.

Any individual, business or nonprofit organization that paid the tax for long distance or bundled service billed after Feb. 28, 2003 and before Aug. 1, 2006 is eligible to request the refund. The Tax Center has these forms for tax payers to file along with their other

tax information.

Those who file their taxes with the Tax Center receive their refund directly deposited in their bank accounts eight to 10 days after filing. For those who choose to have their refund sent by check through the mail, they have to wait a week longer, said Toryk.

Starting Feb. 15, the Tax Center will open their services for amended returns and filing for Schedule A. This is to ensure all tax documents are received by the tax payer, the initial rush to file taxes is over and there is more time available to file these detailed returns.

What is need when filing taxes at the Tax Center:

W-2s for self and spouse, for all employers in 2006.

Bank interest or dividends statements or knowledge of exact amounts for filing purposes.

Full names and social security number of all of those claimed on a tax return, taxpayer, spouse, children and other dependents.

Social security number or employer identification number of day care providers, names, amount paid, addresses and phone numbers.

Proof of account, such as a bank statement, Leave and Earning Statement or blank check.

Family members filing taxes for deployed troops need to bring a power of

attorney, authorizing them to file and sign their taxes. If access to the deployed service member's myPay account is needed to retrieve the W-2 form, the Installation Personnel Administration Center can provide a special pin code for those purposes only to the POA holder, explained Toryk.

The Tax Center does not prepare returns for rental property or self-employed individuals. There are no children allowed at the Tax Center and those without the proper proof of account will be turned away from the Tax Center's services. For more information, call 830-4829, or go to the Village Center, building 1551.















