

# OBSERVATION Post

MARINE CORPS AIR GROUND COMBAT CENTER

FEBRUARY 23, 2007

SERVING THE TWENTYNINE PALMS COMMUNITY SINCE 1957

VOL. 50 ISSUE 7

## India Battery brings out big guns

LANCE CPL. NICOLE A. LAVINE  
COMBAT CORRESPONDENT

"Fire mission! Fire mission," shouted Marines of India Battery, 3rd Battalion, 11th Marine Regiment as orders from the nearby Fire Control Center blared out of the communication radio.

Two Marines took hold on each side of the feeding tray, with a High Explosive round on it. Upon the command, "Home," a Marine holding a loading rod shoved the round into the chamber. As the door of the howitzer slammed shut and was locked, another Marine attached a lanyard to the firing lever and twisted the lanyard across his body, igniting the round. An explosion powerful enough to rattle human bones created a storm-cloud of dust and sand.

Marines of India Battery, 3rd Battalion, 11th Marine Regiment took part in a Tactical Air Control Party exercise Feb. 13 in the Quackenbush training area, one of the Combat Center's many ranges.

The three-day exercise utilized three howitzers to provide artillery support for the Expeditionary Warfare Training Group Pacific pilots who were learning how to better engage targets, said Sgt. Victor Gonzalez-Aguirre, a section chief with the battery.

The exercise also acted as a refresher course for the use of M198 Towed Howitzers which were used during the unit's recent deployment to Okinawa, Japan, from July to January.

A new howitzer called the M777 Lightweight Howitzer is now in use and provided to Marines of 3/11, who will be the first Marine unit to utilize these weapons in Iraq, said Staff. Sgt. Miguel A.

Aviles, motor transport chief.

"There were no M777's in Japan, so we had to use the M198's for our field exercises," said Aviles, a native of Chicago. "All the M777's are being retrofitted right now, that's why we're using the M198 today."

Although the howitzer may fire as many as 10 types of rounds, the only three used in this exercise were the High Explosive round, Illumination round, and White Phosphorus Smoke round, said Cpl. James Sellers, an ammunition team chief.

For the exercise, a forward party traveled ahead of the gun line and out of the way of the impact area, where they plotted the position of each round as it landed. From there, the forward party transferred information to the Fire Direction Control Center via radio, where information was analyzed, plotted, recorded and forwarded to the artillery Marines on the gun line. Then the necessary changes in direction and distance were made in order to hit the target, said Sgt. Jonathan B. Smith, FDCC assistant operations chief.

"We like to focus on this type of training a lot," said Smith. "I haven't personally done this in real life, but it's always fun working with aircraft."

Capt. Stephen Ford, commanding officer for the exercise, said despite the slower pace, the training was valuable.

"It's good to get back out and knock some of the rust off," said Ford. "These were slower shoots, so the Marines get more practice with the procedure and get their heads back in an artillery mindset before another deployment."

The unit continues to train for an upcoming deployment to Iraq later this year.



LANCE CPL. NICOLE A. LAVINE  
Marines from India Battery, 3rd Battalion, 11th Marine Regiment load a round into the chamber of an M198 Towed Howitzer in the Quackenbush training area Feb. 13.

## Plaque commemorates first presidential visit to MCAAGCC



CPL. REGINA N. ORTIZ  
Brig. Gen. Douglas M. Stone speaks about the meaning behind the plaque at Gray's Field Feb. 16

CPL. REGINA N. ORTIZ  
COMBAT CORRESPONDENT

A plaque in honor of President George W. Bush's visit to the Combat Center last year was unveiled at Lance Cpl. Torrey L. Gray Field Feb. 16.

President Bush was the first president to ever visit the base April 23, 2006, to meet and greet service members and their families at a church service and luncheon at Phelps Hall.

"The general told me that I'm the first president ever to have come," said Bush, at the time of his visit. "It's an honor to be the first president, but he also reminded me that my mother beat me to the punch."

The plaque is being placed at the field, where Bush's aircraft landed the day of his visit. He praised the Marines for their efforts and support in Operation

Iraqi Freedom.

"I'm incredibly proud of the United States Marine Corps," said Bush during his speech to the crowd. "You bring honor to our country. You represent the very best of America."

Bush also spoke to the family members of deployed Marines and sailors.

"It's hard when your loved one is overseas," he said. "I respect your sacrifice and want to thank you very much for your service to our country as well."

Bush spent the day meeting and speaking with many members of the community.

The commanding general, Brig. Gen. Douglas M. Stone, wanted to commemorate the memorable day and leave a mark in history at the Combat Center, he said during his speech at the presentation.

See PLAQUE, A8

## Marines fight silent enemy at Mojave Viper



LANCE CPL. RYAN C. HEISER  
Pfc. Shane N. Kelley practices vehicle searching techniques during a vehicle checkpoint exercise recently in the Combat Center training area.

LANCE CPL. RYAN C. HEISER  
2ND MARINE DIVISION

Pfc. Nicholas J. Cook slowly makes his way toward the city's edge. He winds his way out of the forward operating base, past the concertina wire toward bleachers outside the empty town. He passes several plywood signs with warnings to intruders on one side and helpful reminders to troops on the other.

This "town," however, is simply a training environment, not the real deal where he will find himself in only a matter of weeks.

Company B, 1st Battalion, 2nd Marine Regiment, Regimental Combat Team 2, reviewed classes recently on Iraqi culture and practiced their mounted patrol procedures, vehicle check point

See MOJAVE VIPER, A8

### Weekend Weather

Friday 56/32  
rain with a chance of thunderstorm

Saturday 62/36  
Mostly Sunny

Sunday 64/40  
Mostly Sunny

### Inside this issue

- A4: 2/7 make statement with VCP's
- A5: \$10,000 re-enlistment incentives
- A6: Center for Intrepid opens doors

### Observations



Chaplain puts faith in action

### This Day in Marine Corps History

— 1945 —

Five Marines and a Navy Corpsman raised the American flag on Mount Suribachi, Iwo Jima.



## 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.

The Tax Center can only prepare returns for active-duty, reserve, retired and dependants of service members.

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

### ROAD CLOSURES

-The Bourke Road and Eighth Street intersection will remain closed. This area will be repaved in the near future to correct a drainage problem.

-Third Street between Brown and Griffin Road will be closed for repaving from approximately Monday to Feb. 23.

-Del Valle Road will be repaved from Adobe Road to Tenth Street. Stoplights will be installed on Del Valle at the Third and Fifth Street intersections as part of this project. The repaving work will be phased in order to minimize disruptions to traffic flow on Del Valle, but detours onto Mainside will be required. The construction period will be from approximately March 1 to Sept. 1. Please be attentive to all traffic control signs.

### CONSTRUCTION AT HOSPITAL RESTRICTS PARKING LOT & CLINIC ACCESS

Through March 2, entrances to the OB/GYN and Family Medicine clinics will be closed, due to sidewalk repairs. March 5 to March 9, entrances to the Tricare/Mental Health and Pediatrics/Optomety clinics will be closed. Two clinic entrances and a handicap ramp will always be accessible.

Parking spaces 31 - 40 in the Staff parking area will be secured. These spaces are located

directly across First Street from the emergency room sidewalk. The spaces are being converted to handicap parking spaces. Please do not park in these spaces.

Beginning Thursday, entering and exiting the hospital patient parking lot will be reduced to one lane at times, due to the construction of a new sidewalk, from Sturgis Road to the clinics. A flagman will be on site to direct the flow of traffic, to minimize inconvenience. Construction will last approximately three weeks. We apologize for any inconvenience, these projects may cause.

## LEISURE ITEMS

### ANHEUSER-BUSCH ADVENTURE PARKS

Anheuser-Busch Adventure Parks is offering complimentary admission for active duty military representing all five service branches, active members of a reserve or National Guard unit, and up to three direct dependants. Valid for one complimentary single-day admission per person, per year, to one of the following Anheuser-Busch Adventure Parks: SeaWorld Orlando, San Diego, and San Antonio, or Busch Gardens Tampa Bay or Williamsburg, Penn., or Sesame Place or Water Country USA or Adventure Island. Offer valid through Dec. 31. Operating days and hours vary by park. Please check with each specific park for current operating schedule.

### SMP MARDI GRAS PARTY

The Single Marine Program will be hosting a free Mardi Gras Party at the Zone Saturday at 6 p.m. For more information, call 830-4767.

### COMBAT COMICS

Marine Corps Community Services presents Combat Comics at Sunset Cinema Wednesday. Doors open to the public at 6:30 p.m. The show begins at 7 p.m. There will be three comics performing: Chris Clobber, headliner, Frank Lucero and Tymon Shipp. Beer will be served at the theater. Due to adult nature of the show no one will be admitted under age 18 without an active duty military ID, and no babies in carriers. This show is free.

### LIFELONG LEARNING LIBRARY "A NIGHT OF DR. SEUSS"

The Lifelong Learning Library will be hosting "A Night of Dr. Seuss" March 1 from 6:30 to 7:30 p.m. Come and celebrate the birthday and lyrical prose of the beloved author and illustrator, Dr. Seuss. We will be reading for most of the evening with crafts to finish. All ages are welcome to join in the fun. For more information, call 830-6875.

# 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

## Town hall meetings for Vista Del Sol residents

Town hall meetings will be held for all Vista Del Sol residents on the following times and dates. Attendance at one of the meeting is required to be eligible to be issued portable air conditioners. All town hall meeting will be conducted at the Protestant Chapel. It is important to have this information disseminated as installation instructions and demonstrations will be given.

**Mar. 6 1 to 3 p.m.**

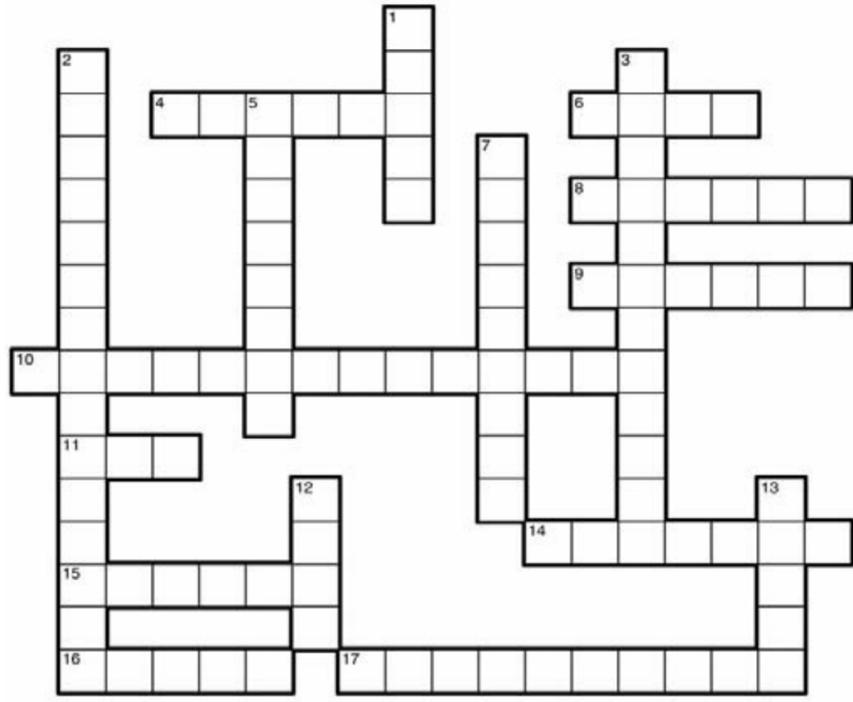
**Mar. 8 6 to 8 p.m.**

**Mar. 12 6 to 8 p.m.**

**Mar. 14 1 to 2 p.m.**

**Mar. 19 6 to 8 p.m.**

# RANDOM TRIVIA



**ACROSS**

- 4. The capital of Austria is?
- 6. In the armed forces, which is known as the senior service?
- 8. Traditional Mariachi dance is associated with what country?
- 9. What month has the highest percentage of births?
- 10. This president was the first to be sworn into office by his father.
- 11. What is the only mammal that can fly?
- 14. This planet was named for the Roman god of commerce, travel and thievery.
- 15. What movie was released as "Vaselina" in Venezuela?
- 16. This state was named after the Indian word meaning friends or allies.
- 17. Humans and what other mammal have unique fingerprints?

**DOWN**

- 1. Which European country controlled Somalia from 1889 until World War II?
- 2. She was the first woman to serve as Secretary of State.
- 3. The world's largest lake is?
- 5. What is the only mammal that can't jump.
- 7. What ancient people worshipped the goddess Isis?
- 12. 1/4 of the bones in your body reside in this pair on your body.
- 13. Algebra was invented by what people in the 9th Century?

[Solutions on A9]



## 2/7 'War Dogs' make statement with VCPs

**LANCE CPL. RANDALL LITTLE**  
*2ND BATTALION, 7TH MARINE REGIMENT*

SAQLAWIYAH, Iraq — Marines from G Company, 2nd Battalion, 7th Marine Regiment, conducted snap, or hasty, vehicle check points as part of a mounted patrol through the back roads of this small city a few miles northwest of Fallujah Feb. 12 to familiarize themselves with their area of operations.

Snap VCPs are a fundamental part of security operations. They give Marines operating in this area a solid low-level view of what's going on the ground here and a chance to interdict those who would do them harm.

"It's good that we are stopping these vehicles," explained Lance Cpl. Chad R. Whiting, a

35-year-old team leader from Toledo, Ohio. "Even if we're not catching anybody, we're stopping the flow of insurgents. We're denying them freedom of movement to go where they please."

While manning the check points the Marines stop vehicles that match particular profiles used by insurgents. At a VCP today, Cpl. J.D. France's squad stopped a vehicle triggering lessons they learned prior to deploying.

"It was the only vehicle we had seen all morning and the area was pretty built up," explained France, a 22-year-old squad leader from Batesville, Ind. "The vehicle wasn't too beat up and there were four military aged males occupying the vehicle, so that raised suspicions."

"The more suspicious vehicles we stop, the more our odds increase of finding insurgents," explained France. "It also lets the Iraqi people who see us stopping these vehicles know that we are doing our job, that we're making the roads safer for them."

Sometimes the Marines will stop a vehicle and catch insurgents red-handed, other times they are innocent Iraqi people.

"The men we stopped were (not a threat). We checked all of their IDs and it turns out they were school teachers," said France. "I still think it was

good that we stopped them; just because they didn't have any weapons doesn't mean (that vehicle) couldn't have had them."

Even though some of the vehicles the Marines stop don't have insurgents with lots of weapons with them, Marines are still accomplishing a lot by erring on the side of safety.

"If we get nothing else from these vehicles that we're stopping, we're at least learning about the local populace and how cooperative they are with us," Whiting explained. "It's very important that we find out how these people are acting toward us so we know how we should act toward them."

The vehicle search went smoothly and the Iraqi men were very cooperative. Since the Saqlawiyans pass through VCPs so regularly, more often than not they know what to do when they are stopped.

Though the "War Dogs" did not detain any insurgents with their VCP, it can still be considered a successful mission, said France.

"I think the searches went perfectly. We didn't find any weapons or anything else out of the ordinary which is always good," he said. "At the same time the Iraqi people see us checking these vehicles and they know we are out there doing our job: trying to make Saqlawiyah safer for them."



# 3/4 Marines remember fallen brother

LANCE CPL. NATHANIEL SAPP

COMBAT CORRESPONDENT

ANAH, Iraq – Marines from 3rd Battalion, 4th Marine Regiment paused security operations here to take a moment to honor their fallen brother-in-arms.

Five months into their Iraq deployment, which has taken this company of Marines all over the Al Anbar Province, they sustained their second casualty, Lance Cpl. Adam Emul, a 19-year-old infantryman from Vancouver, Wash.

Pictures were spread on the wall behind the traditional memorial of Kevlar helmet set atop a rifle stuck

bayonet-first into a sandbag, adorned with dog tags and combat boots, as Marines from Company L gathered in the auditorium of their patrol base here to remember and pay tribute to Emul.

After the ceremony, Marines gathered in the center of the building to have a moment of silence. The “moment” quickly stretched over several hours as Marines remembered the friend they had lost.

“He was the comic relief for everyone,” said Cpl. Simon Torres, a 22-year-old infantryman, and Emul’s team leader. “We’d watch a movie and he might say four words, but we’d be on the floor crying,

we’d be laughing so hard.”

It was Emul’s first deployment, and since he was fairly new to the Corps, many Marines remembered him from the day he arrived.

“At first he was quiet, but after we all went through Mojave Viper training, he came out of his shell,” said Torres, an Austin, Texas, native. “He opened up to us a lot.”

Emul was a Marine, always willing to lend a hand, said Lance Cpl. Matthew Boddy, a 23-year-old infantryman from Seattle.

“When I first came to the platoon, he helped me out a lot,” said Boddy. “He made sure he introduced me to everyone.”

Originally, Emul was from Saipan, an island in the Pacific Ocean about 120 miles north of Guam. He moved to the U.S. about four years ago.

Emul had a special love for all the traditional things he did when he was young. He loved swimming, spear fishing and his native foods.

“He was just a good, easy-going guy,” said Lance Cpl. Naethan Patterson, a 23-year-old from Jordan, Minn. “I think, in all the time I knew him, I only saw him angry once.”

“Everyone liked him,” he said. The battalion is based in Al Qa’im, Iraq, a city that sits along the Syrian border. They work with local people

and help develop Iraqi Security Forces to disrupt insurgent activities and help stabilize the country.

They are part of Regimental Combat Team 2, a Marine Corps command that is responsible for 30,000 square miles in Iraq’s western Al Anbar Province.

Company L was detached from the rest of the Battalion in December, 2006, to conduct security operations in Hit, Iraq.

They now work for the Camp Lejeune, N.C.-based 2nd Light Armored Reconnaissance Battalion in Anah, Iraq, a city of roughly 20,000 residents located 150 miles northwest of Baghdad in the Al Anbar Province.

## Manpower increase leads to \$10,000 re-enlistment incentive

STAFF SGT. B. J. SWENSON

MCB QUANTICO

MARINE CORPS BASE QUANTICO, Va. — According to Marine Corps Bulletin 7220, Marines re-enlisting or choosing to extend on recruiting duty during Fiscal Year 2007 will be entitled to bonuses, which have not been offered before.

Marine Administrative Message 107/07, End Strength Incentive, and MarAdmin 106/07, Recruiter Extension Program, went into effect Feb. 13 to support the Marine Corps increase in manpower over the next four years, as well as bolster the recruiting force, which will also increase.

The End Strength Incentive program establishes the Assignment Incentive Program for Marines who will re-enlist or have re-enlisted in FY 2007. Qualified Marines who re-enlisted after Oct. 1, 2006 will be issued the AIP.

To qualify, Marines must be a lance corporal or above and have less the 27 years of service. Active duty Marines with less than 20 years of service must re-enlist for a period of four or more years to be eligible for the \$10,000 AIP. Marines with 20 to 27 years of service must re-enlist for three years to be eligible for the \$10,000 AIP.

According to Capt. Phillip Bonincontri, compensation policy chief for Manpower Military Policy, Manpower and Reserve Affairs, the AIP does not replace or supersede any selective re-enlistment bonuses for which a Marine may be eligible. A Marine does rate both the AIP and SRB bonus if his military occupational specialty offers a SRB bonus and the Marine is entitled to receive it.

“Marines must meet with their Career Retention Specialist to ensure eligibility and prepare AIP agreements along with the re-enlistment paperwork,” Bonincontri said. He also said CRSs must submit the paperwork through the chain of command along with the re-enlistment request.

The Recruiter Extension Program also offers an AIP for recruiters wishing or willing to extend their current recruiting tours by six to 12 months. Qualified canvassing recruiters (8411s) will receive a \$500 per month AIP in addition to all other pay and allowances, including their current special duty assignment (SDA) pay - \$450 per month.

To be eligible for the AIP, canvassing recruiters must have less than 180 days remaining on their 36-month recruiting tour and be on track to complete a successful recruiting tour. “The recruiter’s command must favorably endorse the Marine’s extension package to receive the AIP. The extension and AIP do not take effect until the beginning of the first month after completion of the original 36-month recruiting tour, and only one extension is authorized,” Bonincontri said.

Career recruiters (8412s) and Extension on Active Duty recruiters, reserve Marines who return to active duty to serve on recruiting duty, are not eligible for the AIP.

However, if a canvassing recruiter is selected as a career recruiter during the extension period, he will continue to receive the AIP through the duration of the extension period. Canvassing recruiters currently on an extension may be eligible for the AIP provided they meet the prescribed requirements, but will only be paid for the remainder of the

extension they are currently on.

Recruiters are also eligible to receive the End Strength Incentive AIP, provided they qualify to all terms and conditions, Bonincontri added.

As with the End Strength AIP, recruiters wishing to take advantage of the AIP must contact their CRS to complete the AIP agreement.

Deployed Marines may also take advantage of MarAdmin 108/07, Deployment Extension Program. This program offers a \$500 per month AIP for deployed Marines who voluntarily extend their contracts past their Expiration of Active Service in order to stay with their deployed units which were involuntarily extended on their current deployments.

Marines may apply for the Deployment Extension AIP only if they have less than 12 months remaining on their current enlistment. The AIP does not begin until the first month following the Marine’s original EAS and only runs until the Marine executes terminal leave, the deployment terminates, or the Marine re-enlists to take advantage of the End Strength Incentive AIP.

According to Bonincontri, the Deployment Extension AIP will only apply to a handful of Marines currently deployed. He also stated M&RA anticipates an estimated 17,000 re-enlistments under the End Strength AIP and only a 100 to 200 recruiting duty extensions.

For more information, consult you unit Career Retention Specialist or visit the MarAdmin Web site at [www.usmc.mil/maradmins/maradmin2000.nsf/maradmins](http://www.usmc.mil/maradmins/maradmin2000.nsf/maradmins).

# Wounded veterans rehab center opens its doors

CPL. HEIDI E. LOREDO

BS SAN ANTONIO

Following the devastating attack on Pearl Harbor in 1941, the nation responded by setting out to sea the U.S.S. Intrepid, an aircraft carrier which would later become the namesake to the largest contribution to wounded veterans in the history of the nation.

Army officials welcomed wounded service members and their families to the dedication of the Center for the Intrepid on Jan. 29, at Brooke Army Medical Center, San Antonio, Texas.

More than 3,000 people including General James Conway, commandant of the Marine Corps, Sgt. Maj. John Estrada, sergeant major of the Marine Corps, General Peter Pace, chairman of the Joints Chiefs of Staff, and members of the Senate Armed Services Committee, Senators Hilary Rodham Clinton and John McCain, participated in the ceremony for the 60,000 sq. ft. center.

The state-of-the-art, four-story rehabilitation center will provide military patients with severe extremity injuries, amputations and burns the best opportunity to regain their pre-injury abilities in a supportive and healing environment. The \$50 million center was built entirely from private funds donated by more than 600,000 Americans through the Intrepid Fallen Heroes Fund.

"In the center behind me there are no rooms dedicated to

the name of one contributor," said Richard Santulli, chairman of the Intrepid Fallen Heroes Fund. "As a matter of fact, we could have raised the entire cost in two weeks if we would have allowed the building to be named. Instead, we chose the name 'Intrepid,' a truly fitting adjective for the brave men and women who will be treated here."

The elliptical structure includes clinical space, a military performance lab with a gait lab and computer assisted rehabilitation environment, a pool, indoor running track, two-story climbing wall and prosthetic center. The center will provide amputees and those with severe extremity injuries the opportunity to regain their ability to live and work productively. The center also features an indoor gym, virtual reality dome where veterans can improve their balance, shooting and driving simulators, and a water aquatics area with a "flow rider" that resembles a water slide.

"This facility will not only serve military personnel injured in Iraq and Afghanistan, but all veterans injured in prior conflicts and service members critically injured in non-combat operations," said Bill White, president of the Intrepid Foundation.

White said most of the patient activities are intentionally placed along the outer edge of the building, and the generous use of glass provides patients, who often spend the entire day in rehabilitation,



Member of the Senate Armed Services Committee, Senator John McCain speaks during the official dedication of the Center for the Intrepid at Fort Sam Houston, Texas, Jan. 29.

views to the outside and plenty of natural daylight.

Two new Fisher Houses, designed as homes away from home for families of patients receiving medical care, opened their doors too. The Center for the Intrepid and the Fisher Houses are designed to co-exist in a "village concept"

around a common courtyard on the five-acre site.

Among those who participated in the ceremony was 23-year-old Lance Cpl. Oyoana Allende. The Chicago native suffered second and third degree burns in June 2005 from the blast of a suicide vehicle-borne improvised explosive

device during her deployment to Iraq. Allende is thankful for the help she has received during her recovery and says the Center for the Intrepid will prove to be invaluable to wounded veterans.

"The center is great, they have everything here," said Allende. "What's most important is that it's going to help the new wounded Marines, and this is the best place to be. Not only is the facility great, but also the people who work here are like my family. They take great care of me and make sure I make it to my appointments."

Cpl. Aaron Mankin from Rogers, Ark., also attended the ceremony. Mankin, a combat correspondent assigned to II Marine Expeditionary Force, was severely wounded in May 2005 during Operation Matador near Haditha, Iraq. He suffered burns on over 25 percent of his body including his face, hands and arms.

"The Center for the Intrepid is a focal point not just for wounded service members to receive care, but it's for service members and their families," said Mankin. "It's not just a hospital. It's home and a new beginning for them."

Inside the center is a modern, advanced and unique training and rehabilitation center devoted to the advancement of the science and art of prosthetic rehabilitation and care for burn victims.

"The Center for the Intrepid has no equal anywhere because the men and women who fight for our freedom have no equal as well," said Arnold Fisher, chairman of the board for the Intrepid Museum Foundation.

General Pace told the crowd of injured service members their efforts were by no means in vain.

See REHAB, A7



Wounded Marines, currently recovering at Brooke Army Medical Center, Fort Sam Houston, Texas, walk the red carpet for the opening of the Center for the Intrepid at Fort Sam Houston, Texas, Jan. 29.

## REHAB from A6

"There are those who speak about you who say, 'he lost an arm, he lost a leg, she lost her sight,'" said Pace. "I object. You gave your arm, you gave your leg, you gave your sight as gifts to your nation that we might live in freedom."

Senator McCain addressed service members and their families and thanked them for their personal sacrifice given to their country. In the past month, deployed service members learned their tour in Iraq or Afghanistan will last longer than they were initially told and others learned they will soon return to the Middle East sooner than they had been led to expect.

"It is a sad and hard thing to ask so much more of Americans who have already given more than their fair share to the defense of our country," said McCain. "As you know, the war in which you have fought has divided the American people. But it has divided no American in their admiration for you and from our obligations to you."

Senator Clinton called on the nation to set aside differences the public might have and remain supportive of those wounded warriors who have a challenging road ahead.

"This center stands as a solemn pledge of healing and support our nation owes you," said Clinton. "The values that unite us outweigh the differences that divide us. There is common ground on higher ground, and on that higher ground we stand to pay in full our debt to those wounded."

Clinton looked back into history to tie the U.S.S. Intrepid to the newly built center and how it applies to the nation's wounded veterans. She said the center is an example of how the country came together after the attack on Pearl Harbor.

"The keel of the Intrepid was laid one week after Pearl Harbor, an attack that devastated our Navy and shocked our country," said Clinton. "The Intrepid was our first answer to show the enemy that they have damaged our ships, but not our spirits. We are here again to celebrate once again that spirit. This center stands as that pledge – a solemn pledge of the healing and support our nation owes every one of you."

# 2/7 Marines forge strong relationships with Iraqi people

LANCE CPL. RANDALL LITTLE

2ND BATTALION, 7TH MARINE REGIMENT

SAQLAWIYAH, Iraq – "War Dogs" are building Iraqi support to stifle the insurgents.

Marines from Company G, 2nd Battalion, 7th Marine Regiment, conducted a mounted patrol through a small village in the Saqlawiyah area Feb. 13 to gather information on insurgents and scout for future places out of which the Marines can operate in the future.

"It's important for us to get out and talk with the Iraqi people," explained Lance Cpl. Michael W. Carter, a 20-year-old team leader from Santa Ana, Calif. "Once we build up conversations and get to know these people, they will be more inclined to give us information about the insurgents, where they are operating out of, and let us operate out of their homes."

Food and water are precious commodities here. Supporting the citizens by supplying them with these essentials of life translates to building a solid foundation of trust.

"Not only does giving the people water and food make you feel good," Carter said, "giving them the things that we often take for granted gets them to warm up to us and work with us (more willingly) in the future."

Marines know the benefits to having good rapport with the local populace are not always immediate.

"We know that we might not benefit from our actions now," Carter explained. "By helping the Iraqi peo-



Lance Cpl. Kevin J. Force, a 27-year-old team leader from St. Louis, listens as an Iraqi woman explains her living conditions after losing a family member to an insurgent attack in Saqlawiyah, Iraq.

ple continuously, someone who lost a brother or other family member to the insurgents might see that we are the good guys and call the tip line and give us useful information."

Marines will often stop at a house along their patrol route to talk to the residents and get to know them.

"(A) family we visited (today) had lost a family member to the insurgency, and when we first started talking to them they seemed hesitant,"

said Lance Cpl. Kevin J. Force, a 27-year-old team leader from St. Louis. "We showed them we were the good guys by talking to them and showing interest in their needs. (Hopefully) that family will help us later on and tell everyone how the Marines are the good guys."

Marines feel that by helping the Iraqi people it will, in the end, help the Marines succeed.

"The mission was very success-

ful. I think we accomplished a lot by meeting with the Iraqi people the way we did," Force explained. "After showing the people that we are friendly and we can be trusted they will tell other people about us. The people were very receptive and I think that when we come back in the future that they will either give us information or let us possibly use their house for a listening and observation post."

LANCE CPL. RANDALL LITTLE



CPL. REGINA N. ORTIZ

This plaque sits at the east end of Gray's Field commemorating President George Bush's visit to MCAGCC last year.

## PLAQUE from A1

The ceremony to present the plaque at the field was held before the President's Day holiday weekend. The holiday was originally made to celebrate the birthday of the nation's first president, George Washington. Time evolved this day to be a celebration in honor of all presidents.

Parties and balls were often held to celebrate the holiday in the early days. Then in the 1970s, it became a nationally observed holiday where workplaces were closed and employees were off every third Monday of February.

This President's Day holiday weekend kicked off by community members looking back on the day Bush came to the Combat Center.

Lt. Michael A. Taylor, a chaplain with the Religious Ministries Directorate, said a president visit to the base was long overdue and it is

unbelievable that not until last year a president came.

"This base is the premier war-fighting training facility and it's amazing that no other president has come to visit before President Bush," he said.

Taylor was also glad to see the mark left in history where future troops and family members can see the plaque and reflect on the day that the president visited the Combat Center while also displaying his tremendous faith in the Marine Corps and its Marines.

"The formation of this government is an important milestone toward our victory in Iraq," Bush explained during his visit. "A lot of times people ask me about my attitude about things, and here's my attitude: the only way we can lose in Iraq is if we lose our nerve.

"And, I'm not losing my nerve, and I know that the United States Marine Corps will not lose their nerve either," he added.

## MOJAVE VIPER from A1

operations, and vehicle and personnel search techniques. The exercises were part of their pre-deployment Mojave Viper training in the California desert.

"This type of training is great for Marines because we need to be able to know (the Iraqi) culture in order to interact and better train the Iraqi Army and Iraqi Police when we deploy," said Cook, a rifleman with the company.

The Marines spent the entire morning receiving classes on cultural awareness, urban mounted movement, mounted patrol operations, setting up vehicle check points, or VCPs, check-point operations, countering vehicle borne improvised explosive devices, and vehicle and personnel searches.

"For junior Marines who have never deployed, this is as close to real-life scenarios as they will get," said Cpl. Oswin T. Burnett, an instructor controller with the Urban Warfare Training Center at Mojave Viper. "We have people who speak Arabic, life-like buildings and streets, basically everything you will see in Iraq. It's all the same."

Burnett said the reasoning behind all the simulated real-life training was to make sure Marines understood not only what they are doing for

every possible situation, but also why they do it.

"The classes and technology here (at Mojave Viper) are making our training better and making us a lot more efficient," said Cook, a Valatie, N.Y., native. "We know more and are more prepared for different situations. This is where you realize it's real, and that in a little while you will really be in Iraq."

To help solidify this fact within the Marines' minds, many of the classes, such as cultural awareness and searching procedures, are taught by Iraqi role players like Loay F. Alkhafaji.

"I teach them these things because, as I am helping them, so do I expect them to help my people," said Alkhafaji, a linguist and Iraqi role player at Mojave Viper.

Alkhafaji, an Iraqi native who now lives in Pasadena, Calif., came to the United States with a dream of a new, safer, country where his family could live a better life. He feels it is his duty to his country to help the battalion's Marines before they deploy in March.

"I think they will do good. I know they help a lot, I hope," Alkhafaji said as his eyes grew distant, "because they must."

Like many of his fellow role-players, he regularly talks to his family in Iraq, and gets reports on what Marines in their areas are doing. He uses this information to better teach the Marines in his classes and improve their situational awareness.



LANCIE CPL. RYAN C. HEISER

A rifleman with Company B, 1st Battalion, 2nd Marine Regiment, Regimental Combat Team 2, practiced personnel search procedures recently in the Combat Center training area.

"Recently," the Iraqi laughs, "the big thing has been teaching them to use the door, instead of crashing through a window. Imagine, you are eating with your family and several large, armed men jump through your windows. It can be terrifying."

Alkhafaji said the best tool for cultural awareness is the Marine's mind. He asked each Marine to think about what he does, and what if it was their family in the house.

Cpl. Jeremy T. Cole, a squad leader with the company, likes the new Mojave Viper training.

"If we can handle it here, it sets a good foundation for operations in Iraq," said Cole, a Lakewood, Ohio, native.

Cole, an Operation Iraqi Freedom veteran, deployed last time without the additional training Mojave Viper provides, but seeing the improved reactions of his squad members has made him a believer in the training.

"Their situational awareness has improved, and they can react to anything because they have

already seen it before here in the desert," he said.

Cole added the training creates initiative and eliminates hesitation because of the muscle-memory it instills. He said without a new type of training, Marines would run the risk of growing stagnant and complacent with their actions.

"I'll be honest, none of us want to be here but it is exactly what we need. I wouldn't want to go back (to Iraq) without coming here first," said Cole.

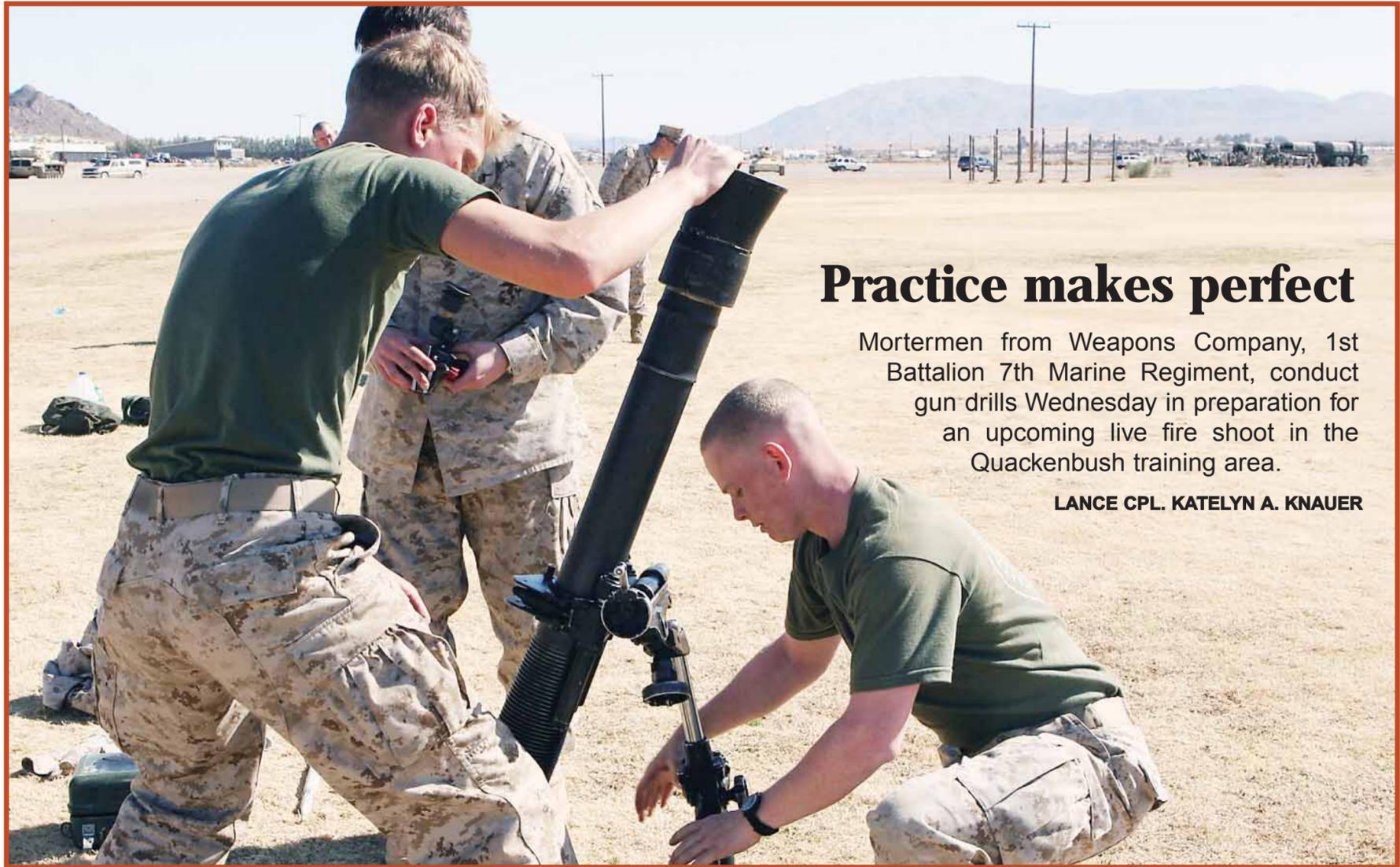
After the classes, the vehicle searches, and the personnel searches, the Marines worked their way back to their FOB, looking forward to a meal and a warm bed. As they made their way back through the winding entrance they passed the warning signs once more. One sign, larger and more ominous than the rest, is decorated with a black skull-and-crossbones, and reads: Complacency Kills.

In the seemingly endless desert of California, the Marines of 1/2 are doing their best to prepare themselves to fight this silent enemy.

A crossword puzzle grid with the following words filled in:

- Across: CALVIN COOLIDGE, GREASE, TEXAS, KOALABEARS, AUGUST, MEXICO, MERCURY
- Down: MAD ELYN, VIENNA, LEPTHA, EGYP, NAVY, K, S, P, ANS, RIO, A, B

**SOLUTIONS**



## Practice makes perfect

Mortermen from Weapons Company, 1st Battalion 7th Marine Regiment, conduct gun drills Wednesday in preparation for an upcoming live fire shoot in the Quackenbush training area.

LANCE CPL. KATELYN A. KNAUER





# OBSERVATIONS

FEBRUARY 23, 2007

## Chaplain puts faith in action, adopts newborn, gives hope

RACHELLE STIGER

SPECIAL TO THE OBSERVATION POST

In the classes that Navy Matthew Weems and his wife, Sue, attended to become adoptive parents, they were told that 50 percent of all birth moms change their mind in the delivery room. Furthermore, instructors prepared them to accept the high probability that they would be asked to take a toddler from an abusive situation or drug-addict home.

Just three months after completing the requirements to adopt, the Weems' found themselves bringing home a healthy newborn baby they named Jedediah William. He arrived Jan. 25, a month shy of his due date, at Arrowhead Regional Medical Center in Colton, Calif. "For us, the road has been pretty smooth," Sue said. "We haven't had to wait at all."

Although the birth mom signed away her rights to the child, it will be six months to a year before the adoption is complete. But already the Weems' say they feel blessed to be a part of his life.

The desire to one day adopt was innate in the young couple when they first talked about their future family. "We both worked in social arenas," said Sue, currently an English teacher at Twentynine Palms Middle School. "We saw the impact that family life has on kids."

Weems, a chaplain with 3rd Battalion, 11th Marines, chimed in, "It's also a part of



The Weems family surrounds Jedediah, the newest addition to their family, in front of their home.

RACHELLE STIGER

our faith. Salvation is truly adoption." He pointed to James 1:27 from the Bible — "Religion that God our Father accepts as pure and faultless is this: to look after orphans and widows in their distress..."

Cradling the tiny baby (five pounds, two ounces at birth)

in his arms and gazing down, Weems added, "For us to provide a home for a little guy like this, it's awesome!"

The Weems' have three children of their own — Ransom, 6, Memphis, 5, and Cora, 3 — who got behind the idea to adopt.

Ransom immediately asked if they could order a boy. Weems has joked that with two sisters, his mom and their female dog, Ransom was feeling the need for a little more testosterone in the family.

The kids had a full year to

ask questions about the possible addition to their family while their parents met the requirements for adopting a child. After the initial paperwork and fingerprinting, the Weems' attended numerous training sessions and meetings in Rancho Cucamonga,

Victorville and San Bernardino. The travel, meetings and time apart from their kids was the most draining part of the process, said Weems, and it required a lot of patience.

See ADOPTION, B8

## New look in base housing: Joshua Heights gets facelift

CPL. EVAN M. EAGAN

COMBAT CORRESPONDENT

The Family Housing Office, Lincoln Property Management and Hunt Building Company cut the ribbon on recently re-constructed homes in the Joshua Heights housing area Feb. 13.

Construction began in the staff noncommissioned officer and noncommissioned officer housing area in January 2006 with the first family, Master Sgt. and Mrs. James Stanley, moving in shortly after the ribbon was cut.

Ninety-nine total units were demolished and rebuilt, with 98 being in Joshua Heights and one in Ocotillo Heights.

Originally, the plan was to renovate the homes, however, the project planners put together a proposal that allowed the base to completely replace the homes without significantly impacting the overall project.

"The renovations were projected to cost a little more than \$64,000 per house," said Raymon

Zapata, MCAGCC Family Housing Officer. "With any renovation there are always surprises that add to the cost... In the end a new home is more marketable and cheaper to maintain than an older one, because of all the efficiencies that can be built into it."

Various housing plans were built with 17 three-bedroom and 13 four-bedroom houses being built for NCO's, and 43 three-bedroom and 25 four-bedroom houses being built for SNCO's.

The price tag for the project was more than \$16.5 million, with each house costing about \$170,000.

The difference between the new houses and the houses that once occupied Joshua Heights was like night and day, said Zapata.

"The old Joshua Heights homes were single floor units built in 1974 and reflected a 70's flavor and floor plan that had become very dated," he said. "I think the new homes speak for themselves. The remark I've heard from most folks is that they don't feel like they're living in base housing."

Commanding General, Brig. Gen. Douglas M. Stone attended the ribbon cutting ceremony and spoke about how pleased he is with the new houses.

"These houses are nicer than any housing any general officer received when we joined the Corps," he said referring to when he and Maj. Gen. Michael R. Lehnert, Commanding General of Marine Corps Installations West, joined the Marine Corps. "It's reassuring to know families are living in this quality of home when their Marines are deployed and handling tough tasks."

Stanley said the new housing is outstanding and exceeded his expectations.

"In my 20 plus years of experience in the

Marine Corps, this is definitely the best house I've lived in."

Zapata said the partnership between the base and Lincoln Property Management is one of great benefit.

"The Lincoln team is committed to our families and I witness this dedication each and every day," he said. "Many of the Lincoln employees are the family members of our Marines and sailors, so they have walked in the shoes of those they are here to serve."

Although the first family has moved into their new home, the remaining homes will be occupied in three phases and should be filled by late March.



CORY YENTER

A ribbon waits to be cut in front of the newest house in Joshua Heights base housing area Feb. 13. Master Sgt. and Mrs. Robert Stanley are the recipients of the first completed house.



CORY YENTER

Commanding General, Brig. Gen. Douglas M. Stone along with Cassandra Stanley, wife of Master Sgt. James Stanley, cut the ribbon in front of her family's new home in the Joshua Heights base housing area Feb. 13.



CORY YENTER

Families will soon be moving into houses much like this one, thanks to the completion of the recently reconstructed Joshua Heights base housing area.

## 2007 Intramural Basketball Standings

As of Wednesday

MCCES A	4-0
3/7	7-1
Tanks	4-1
TTECG	2-1
MCCES B	3-2
Hospital	2-2
MWSS-374	2-3
I&L	2-3
CZY-38 Urban	1-3
Magazine	0-5
3rd LAR	0-6

Kevie Rimes slams it home during a 2005 Commanding General's Intramural Basketball League game at the East Gym.

CPL. EVAN M. EAGAN

# Thrift store gives you more than you bargained for

LANCE CPL. NICOLE A. LAVINE

COMBAT CORRESPONDENT

A penny saved is a penny earned. At the Combat Center ASYMCA Thrift Store, you can certainly save a bunch of pennies.

The thrift shop, which opened almost two years ago has seen healthy amounts of donations and customers, said Melissa A. Robinson, thrift store manager.

When the thrift store first opened, it was just an empty building. Before the store could see any profits, donations were needed from base families.

"It didn't take long to get enough stuff in here after we opened," said Robinson.

The store offers low prices for electronics, shoes, bags, belts, books, movies, toys, games, houseware goods and clothes.

Prices for clothes are categorized in seven

price ranges sorted by colored tags. Black tags value the item at 50 cents, whereas light blue tags value items from \$5 to \$10.

"All uniform items are free to all active duty military members," said Robinson. "There is no limit on how much they can take.

Uniform items include Service A blouses, trousers, short and long-sleeve khaki shirts, belts, covers, rank insignias and even maternity uniforms.

Not only do low prices save money for the shoppers, but they also benefit all AYSMCA programs throughout the base, returning favors to the customers who shop at the thrift store.

"All the profit we see goes to all the ASYMCA programs on base," said Robinson.

The programs include child-parent interactive programs, after-school programs, community outreach programs, family assistance programs and the fallen hero program.

Last year, Raytheon, a major U.S. Military contractor, awarded the thrift store with \$10,000 for the best new program for ASYMCA. The money awarded was also given to base ASYMCA programs.

On the first Saturday of each month, the thrift store hosts a bag sale. The rear room is opened, where boxes filled with clothes can be rummaged through freely. The cost of five bags of clothes is only \$2.

"That's on a payday weekend, so a lot of people usually come to that," said Robinson.

Robinson said that even if it is not the first of the month, there are plenty of daily specials to take advantage of.

"We get a lot of people who come in and say they had no idea we were here," said Robinson. She said she wishes to make the shop better known to a greater number of people on base.

She added that the best time for donations

are during working hours, which are 9 a.m. to 5 p.m. Tuesdays, Wednesdays and Thursdays. Donations may also be dropped off during donation times from 8 a.m. to 12 p.m. Monday.

If there are families in dire need, the thrift store also takes vouchers, which may be obtained through the ASYMCA office. This is not an option for everyone, however.

"Families may only use that option after they've exhausted all their military resources," said Andrea Strauss, business manager at the ASYMCA office.

If families do need an extra helping hand beyond the Navy-Marine Corps Relief Society or Red Cross, help can be found by contacting their unit's Family Readiness Officer, who may then coordinate with the ASYMCA office for financial assistance.

For more information about the thrift store, call 830-4692.

**MARINE CORPS  
COMMUNITY SERVICES***PRESS RELEASE*

MARINE CORPS BASE QUANTICO, Va. — The Marine Civilian Development Program is a new program intended to help transitioning Marines - officer and enlisted, active duty and reserve - develop effective private sector skill sets using the foundation built during their service in the Marine Corps. The program is offered by a not-for-profit corporation, funded by private donations and sponsored by Randy Lerner, owner of the Cleveland Browns.

Interested Marines can find more information about the program and may apply online at the MCDP Web site, <http://www.marinecdp.org>. Interested Marines should sign up for the program as soon as they have made the decision to leave the Marine Corps to allow enough time to process the application - ideally 3 to 6 months prior to EAS/EOS. Policy guidance on how to apply for the program and approval procedures is published via MARADMIN 054/07.

According to Laura Bass, Head, PCS Support Section at Headquarters Marine Corps, "The goal of the Program is to help Marines speed their adaptation to working in the private sector. MCDP is targeted at Marines who have honorably completed their term of service and have made the decision to return to the civilian sector. It does not compete with or replace the Marine Corps' retention efforts or Congressionally mandated transition assistance programs."

MCDP will be targeting up

to 800 Marines in the program in CY2007. MCDP is provided at no cost to the Marine Corps, participating Marines, or employers. All lodging and meals are provided by MCDP, as well as transportation and child care, when required. Marines attending the program must be in an approved annual leave status. Courses will be held in Southern California and North Carolina on a recurring basis throughout the year.

MCDP offers two courses of instruction. A six-day Gold course for enlisted or commissioned college graduates and a four-day Scarlet course for high school graduates. A Spouse Orientation is also offered in conjunction with both courses to assist the separating Marine. These courses are taught by a combination of successful business professionals who have been in the Private Sector and former Marines that understand the transition a Marine makes when leaving the Corps. There are also organized social functions and discussions with recruiters and senior level business professionals so that participants can learn first hand what it takes to succeed in the private sector.

The fast paced, focused courses teach participants how to develop the core skills and competencies necessary for success in business. Some of the topics discussed include developing an understanding of the characteristics of the private sector; developing the skills necessary to leverage your Marine Corps training and experience and applying them prudently for success in the private sector;

and illustrating why adapting to the business environment is essential.

Upon successful completion of the program, Marines will be referred to MCDP's national network of Fortune 500 companies for possible employment, but are not obligated to accept an offer of employment. Program Alumni are provided continued coaching and assistance well after the completion of the program to ensure their success in the private sector.

In the fall of 2006, two pilot programs were conducted involving 39 separating Marines. At the end of each of the programs, the participants had great things to say about how much the program helped prepare them to join the private sector:

"Before I attended this program, I thought that as soon as I get out of the Marine Corps, I would be starting over in life. Now that I have completed the program, I realize that instead of starting over, I will be progressing," Cpl. Suzanne Thiele, III MEF.

"I learned a lot during this week, but I think the most important thing that I got out of it is the confidence that this class has provided me to excel in the private sector," Sgt. Heath Gomez, I MEF.

"I don't think I would have been so successful in my job search and interviewing without this knowledge. My wife thinks I'm a changed man, and I am looking forward to my new career," 1st Lt. Daniel Venuto, II MEF.

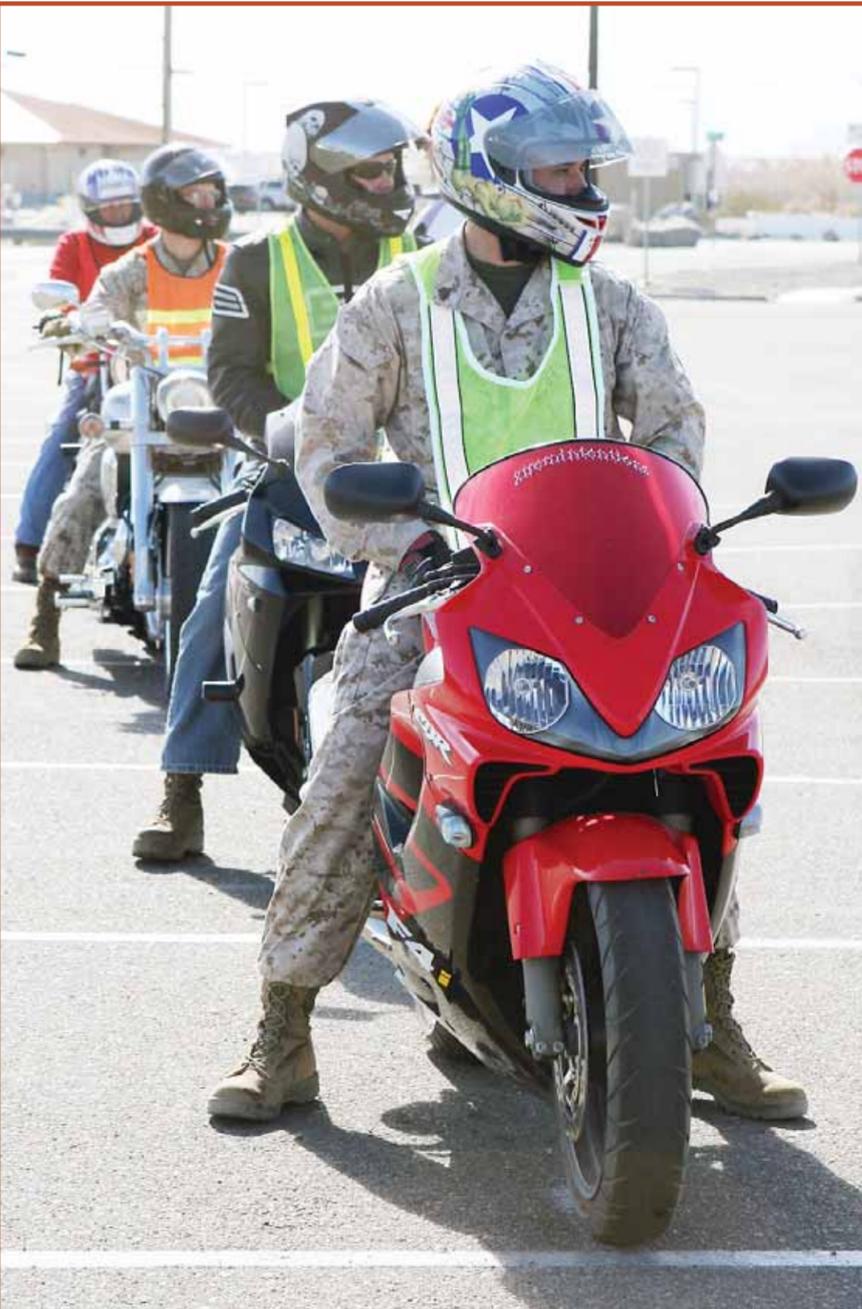
For more information about the Marine Civilian Development Program contact Laura Bass at 703-784-9523, [laura.s.bass@usmc.mil](mailto:laura.s.bass@usmc.mil).











LANCE CPL. KATELYN A. KNAUER

## Gentlemen, start your engines

Marines from the Combat Center take part in a motorcycle basic rider's course Wednesday at the Home Store parking lot. The course is meant to teach basic maneuvering skills, rules of the road and base regulations on riding attire and equipment.

## ADOPTION from B1

They chose to seek an adoption through San Bernardino County on the advice of close friends who had experience with adoption agencies. County programs, their friends told them, are usually in greater need of adoptive parents than private agencies and will often waive all fees usually associated with adoptions – a savings of \$15,000 or more.

The next step in the process was a home study, half of which was licensing their home for childcare and the other half a probing look into their family life. A social worker visited their home three times, asking each member of the family to provide details about their way of life.

Because of the intensity of the process, Weems said they continually questioned "Do I really want to do this?"

"But we knew the end result would be worth it, if we just hung in there," he concluded.

The Weems' home study write-up was completed by the end of October, they were assigned a placement worker in November who would match them with a child, and their first meeting was scheduled for the beginning of December.

The day of their meeting, however, the placement worker called and said they didn't need to meet because a mother had chosen them to adopt her baby. The Weems' later found out, after meeting the birth mom in person, that what attracted her to their family was what she called "family stability."

At the birth mother's request, Jedidiah's transition to the Weems' home will be a "closed adoption." This means that the family will not keep in touch personally with her, but they can forward information about and pictures of Jedidiah to her through a social worker.

The Weems' are sure about one thing. "He'll know he was adopted," Sue said. "We'll tell him that his birth mother was courageous and unselfish and she really wanted the best for him."

In May, the Weems' will be transferring to Marine Corps Base Camp Pendleton where Weems will be the chaplain for the Marine Corps Recruit Depot's Weapons and Field Training Battalion at Edson Range. Sue said she sees their military lifestyle as an advantage for Jedidiah. Adopted kids experience a lot of loss, she said, but as a military family "we help children deal with loss every two to three years. We already have coping strategies in place."

### Marine Corps Recruiting Station New Jersey is looking for Marines from New Jersey for Recruiter Assistance Permissive TAD.

Help New Jersey recruiters find qualified civilians who want to become United States Marines. This is a great way to earn points for promotion. If interested please contact Staff Sgt. C. Scott at 732-866-2928 or by e-mail at [scottcd@marines.usmc.mil](mailto:scottcd@marines.usmc.mil). Marine Corps Recruiting Station New Jersey is also looking for former recruiters who want to return to New Jersey on recruiting duty. If interested, please contact Sgt. Maj. W. Squires at 732-866-2912 or by e-mail at [squireswf@marines.usmc.mil](mailto:squireswf@marines.usmc.mil).





