

OBSERVATION Post

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MARINE CORPS AIR GROUND COMBAT CENTER

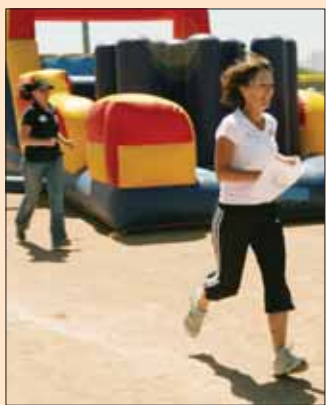
MAY 14, 2008

SERVING THE TWENTYNINE PALMS COMMUNITY SINCE 1957

VOL. 51 ISSUE 20



4 SMP revitalizes The Zone



6 Military spouses run through L.I.N.K.S. CAX



7 Marines volunteer with local Special Olympics



9 3/11 Marine receives Bronze Star Medal

This Day in Marine Corps History
-May 15, 1862-

Cpl. John Mackie became the first Marine to earn the Medal of Honor.

2/7 conducts first combat patrol in support of OEF

CPL. RAY LEWIS

2ND BATTALION, 7TH MARINES

FARAH PROVINCE, Afghanistan — The Marines of 2nd Battalion, 7th Marine Regiment, 1st Marine Division, have made immediate progress with Afghans here despite arriving in Afghanistan just weeks ago.

The Marines met with the village elders in the Golestan District, arranged for key-leader engagements, and laid groundwork for future civil military projects.

While the Marines traveled here to make liaison with provincial and district leaders of the Afghanistan National Police, they also met with the governor of Farah and village elders to open the lines of communication with the Afghan people. The visit culminated with the battalion commander leading his Marines on 2/7's first combat patrol.

"This is who we are, so we wasted no time! I wanted the Afghans to know that we're here to help improve their quality of life. Their mission is our mission; their success is our success," said Lt. Col. Rick Hall, battalion commander, 2/7.

Hall, a Mankato, Minn., native, commands the reinforced light infantry battalion of approximate-



CAPT. WILLIAM V. OSBORNE

A village elder listens as other elders communicate with Marines of 2nd Battalion, 7th Marine Regiment, who were accompanied on their visit to the Golestan District by Spanish and Italian troops, other U.S. service members, and members of the International Security Assistance Force, Afghanistan Regional Security Integration Command West, Regional Command West and Police Mentoring Team.

ly 1,000 Marines and sailors, a combat engineers platoon, a shock trauma platoon, a radio battalion unit, and personnel who specialize in civil military operations.

Sent to Afghanistan to support Operation Enduring Freedom, 2/7 is tasked with the mission of providing security for the ANP, while also mentoring and assisting

in its training within assigned boundaries in order to extend the authority and influence of the

See OEF, A11

3rd CEB works alongside Iraqi locals

CPL. SHAWN COOLMAN

REGIMENTAL COMBAT TEAM 5

ANBAR PROVINCE, Iraq — Marines with Company A, 3rd Combat Engineer Battalion, Regimental Combat Team 5, made easy work out of breaking up a limestone quarry April 20, and enabled Iraqi contractors to continue work on the Tahadi power plant project.

"The Tahadi power plant has been halted due to the lack of equipment to break through a bed of limestone," said Gunnery Sgt. Marco E. Flores, 33, company gunnery sergeant, Company A. "We're going to break through the rock which will provide water, (cooling pond), to the power plant.

"From there they are going to be able to do the rest of the work on their own

See ENGINEERS, A4



CPL. SHAWN COOLMAN

Cpl. Ian A. White, 23, a combat engineer from Birmingham, Ala., and Lance Cpl. Dustin D. Sauder, 22, a combat engineer from Chattanooga, Tenn., both with Company A, 3rd Combat Engineer Battalion, Regimental Combat Team 5, place four of the 265 Bangalore Torpedoes into pre-drilled holes outside of the Tahadi power plant April 20 with the help of two Iraqi contractors.

Combat Center Band mourns drum major



COURTESY PHOTO

Staff Sgt. Charles E. Owens, drum major of the Combat Center Band, and a Ferron, Utah native was killed in a motorcycle collision in Joshua Tree, Calif., May 1.

LANCE CPL. ZACHARY J. NOLA

COMBAT CORRESPONDENT

When people meet each other for the first time, there is often a period when both individuals get a feel for each others' personalities. This period can be both awkward and uncomfortable, and in the Marine Corps this is not an uncommon situation.

Chief Warrant Officer 3 Robert A. Szabo, band officer, Quantico Marine band, Marine Corps Base Quantico, Va., admitted he often feels this way when he meets new Marines.

However, Szabo said this was not the case when he met Staff Sgt. Charles E. Owens, drum

See OWENS, A8



Mental Health Awareness Month

Children's deployment stress may mirror their parent's

KRISTEN WARD
TriWest Healthcare Alliance

While Service members face challenges on the battlefield, continued deployments also can be demanding for families at home. Children waiting for a parent to come back home are often vulnerable to stress, depression and anxiety.

Homecoming is a joyous time for the entire family. But when a parent returns, children are also susceptible to feelings of depression, especially if the mom or dad exhibits symptoms of combat stress or post-traumatic stress disorder. A child whose parent has PTSD will often mimic the symptoms, experts say.

Think your child is depressed?:

Depression is more than just feeling sad. Symptoms can be behavioral changes such as: disinterest in friends or hobbies once enjoyed; difficulty concentrating; irritable moods the majority of the day, every day; and feeling worthless, helpless or guilty.

Children may exhibit physical symptoms, like stomachaches or headaches; have difficulty sleeping or sleep too much; and may have significant weight loss or gain.

What to do first:

If your child displays any of the symptoms mentioned above for at least two weeks, contact your child's doctor or primary care manager for an appointment. The PCM can help you decide if you should pursue behavioral health care.

If the PCM recommends additional care, know that your TRICARE benefits offer the first eight visits with a behavioral health provider without an authorization. TriWest has offered training to many of its civilian providers to help them understand the unique challenges that military families and children are experiencing.

For assistance finding a TRICARE behavioral health provider and making an appointment, call TriWest's Provider Locator and Appointment Assistance Services at (866) 651-4970. Their work hours are 8 a.m. to 6 p.m., Monday through Friday.

For more information about your TRICARE behavioral health benefits, visit <http://www.tricare.mil/mybenefit>.

Online resources to help:

There are several free, online resources for children of all ages to combat depression. These include:

Behavioral Health portal on <http://www.TriWest.com>: This portal offers a Depression Screening Quiz, TRICARE provider locator, TRICARE benefits information and treatment options.

DeploymentKids.com:

This site offers a variety of activities for children such as word games, jokes,

online journals, fun quizzes and a "Where in the World" map to show where the parent is.

MilitaryOneSource.com:

Find articles, booklets, audio CDs and other interactive tools to help you learn how to talk to your child about deployment.

Videos and DVD programs:

A variety of multi-media programs are also available for children of different age ranges:

Help From Home:

Syndicated columnist, radio host and author, Jacey Eckhart chats with military moms about raising children while their husbands were deployed. Also, teens around the U.S. discuss the challenges and rewards of being a military teen. This video series is available as streaming video or a two-DVD set on the Behavioral Health portal on <http://www.TriWest.com>.

Talk, Listen, Connect:

Helping Families Cope With Military Deployment: Features the Sesame Street character Elmo dealing with the prolonged absence of his father. It is suitable for ages 3 to 5, and is available from Sesame Street Workshop at <http://www.sesame-workshop.org/tlc>.

Talk, Listen, Connect:

Deployment, Homecoming, Changes: Another Sesame Street video that aims to aid children in understanding and unbundling the tangle of complex emotions many feel in the midst of a mother's or father's tours of duty away from home, and even broaches the difficult subject of dealing with a parent's debilitating war injury.

Mr. Poe and Friends Discuss Family Reunion After Deployment: Uses cartoon characters to address deployment issues affecting children ages 6 to 11. It is available at <http://www.cs.amedd.army.mil/youth.aspx>.

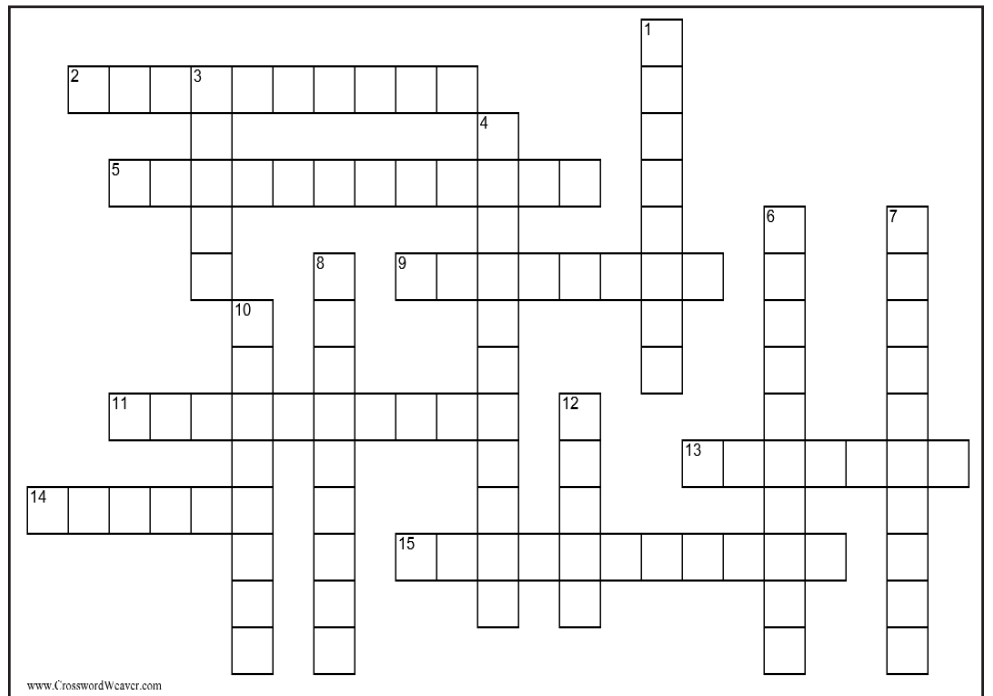
Military Youth Coping With Separation:

When Family Members Deploy: A half-hour video featuring teenagers discussing their feelings and how they cope with issues that arise when a parent is deployed. It is available at <http://www.aap.org/sections/uniformedservices/deployment/videos.html>

The bottom line:

Communicate with your children. Actively listen to their thoughts, fears and concerns. Answer their questions as honestly as you can. Encourage your children to express their feelings through artwork, poems and stories. Watch one of the videos listed above and use the accompanying parent discussion guide to stimulate conversation. Most importantly, be a role model by showing that caring for your mental health is as important as caring for your physical health.

MAY HISTORICAL EVENTS



ACROSS

- 2 _____, D.C., was incorporated as a city May 3, 1802.
- 5 First legal casino opened in _____, N.J., May 26, 1978.
- 9 Pope _____ II was shot and seriously wounded by Turkish assailant May 13, 1981.
- 11 The _____ Bridge was opened to the public in San Francisco May 27, 1937.
- 13 _____ surrendered to the United States May 7, 1945.
- 14 _____ and Mussolini signed a "Pact of Steel," committing Germany and Italy to a military alliance May 22, 1939.
- 15 Gangsters _____ and _____ were killed in Bienville Parish, La., May 23, 1934.

DOWN

- 1 _____ hit his 714th and last home run May 25, 1935.
- 3 Mt. St. _____'s volcano erupted in May 18, 1980 in Washington state.
- 4 Margaret Mitchell won the Pulitzer Prize for "Gone _____" May 3, 1937
- 6 The first _____' _____ observance took place in West Virginia and Pennsylvania May 10, 1908.
- 7 The _____ crashed in Lakehurst, N.J., May 6, 1937.
- 8 Capt. _____ landed in Jamestown, Va., May 2, 1607.
- 10 Clara Barton founded the American _____ May 21, 1881.
- 12 _____ and Clark's expedition began May 14, 1804.

[Solutions on A7]

Centerspeak

What makes your mom the best?

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



PFC. CAMERON B. CLEARY
MCESS STUDENT

"She does a lot for me and is always there for me."



HN (FMF) MICHAEL W. BLY
23RD DENTAL, DENTAL COMPANY

"She's a great cook. She's the one that gives me the poundage and makes me work hard for the PRT."



PFC. BRANDON R. BELONE
WAREHOUSE CLERK, BRAVO COMPANY, HQBN

"Because she never gives up on me and is very supportive, guiding me through my mistakes. That's why my mom is the best."

OBSERVATION POST

Commanding General

Brig. Gen. M.G. Spiese

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WED. 5/14 Juanes Time: 8 p.m. Where: Fantasy Springs Resort Casino 84245 Indian Springs Pkwy, Indio For more info call 342-5000	FRI. 5/16 CG's Golf Tournament Time: 7:30 a.m. Where: Desert Winds Golf Course MCAGCC To sign up or for more info call 830-6132	FRI. 5/16 - SUN. 5/18 Joshua Tree Music Festival Time: All Day Where: Joshua Tree Lake Campground 2601 Sunfair Rd. Joshua Tree For more info log onto www.joshuatreemusicfestival.com	FRI. 5/16 Family Fun Festival at the Home Store Time: 12-4:30 p.m. Where: The Home Store Bldg 1024, next to the Commissary MCAGCC For more info call 830-6163	FRI. 5/16 A tribute to the Grateful Dead Time: 8:45 and 10:15 p.m. Where: Fantasy Springs Resort Casino 84245 Indian Springs Pkwy Indio For more info call 342-5000
SAT. 5/17 Collective Soul Time: 8 p.m. Where: Fantasy Springs Resort Casino 84245 Indian Springs Pkwy Indio For more info call 342-5000	SAT. 5/17 Crazy Train, a tribute to Ozzy Osbourne Time: 8:45 and 10:15 p.m. Where: Rock Yard 84245 Indian Springs Pkwy Indio For more info call 342-5000	SAT. 5/17 Boxing: Alfredo Angulo vs. Richard Guterrez Time: 9:45 p.m. Where: Fantasy Springs Resort Casino, 84245 Indian Springs Pkwy, Indio For more info call 342-5000	SAT. 5/17 Brian McKnight Time: 8 p.m. Where: Spotlight 29 46200 Harrison Pl. Coachella For more info call 775-5566	SUN. 5/18 Champagne Brunch Time: 9 a.m.-2 p.m. Where: Officers' Club MCAGCC For more info call 830-6610

Hashmarks planning to give more bang for your buck

LANCE CPL. NICHOLAS M. DUNN
COMBAT CORRESPONDENT

Are you looking for a way to spice up your night without leaving the Combat Center?

The Marine Corps Community Services Staff Noncommissioned Officers' Club advisory board is coming up with new ideas to show Combat Center Marines and sailors more ways to have fun and keep the traditions of the club.

"We've worked really hard to get this club back up and running," said Master Sgt. Rocky Bennett, Exercise Support Division ordnance chief and Hashmarks advisory board vice president. "We're trying to come up with new special events, but we're trying to keep to traditional events as well."

Coming up Saturday is the club's monthly Texas Hold 'Em tournament at 2 p.m., which is open to all NCOs and above, ages 21 and older.

"We had an amazing turnout last month," said Bennett. "A lot of people like to play Texas Hold 'Em. I never knew it was so popular."

Buy-in for the tournament is \$40. The top prize will be a \$500 gift certificate to the Marine Corps Exchange. The club also hosts a dominoes league every Friday night, beginning at 7 p.m.

One new event the club's advisory board created is the First Friday theme nights, he added. On the first Friday of every month, the club will feature a different genre of music; salsa, rhythm and blues, or country and western. All Staff NCOs and above, ages 21 and older, are welcome to attend.

Hashmarks is building a galley, which will feature a variety of pub-type menu items. Suggestions for the menu and recipe submissions are encouraged.

Hashmarks hopes to host a competition for the best hamburger recipe. The winner will be featured as a menu item called "The Gunny Burger" at the club. The galley is expected to be open for business in the fall.

Monthly Warrior Nights will also continue. Warrior Night is an all-hands celebration for patrons ages 21 and older to honor the Marines and sailors of the Combat Center.

NCO Appreciation Nights will also be held bi-annually. All NCOs and above, ages 21 and older, are invited to bring their spouses to the club for a fun night out. The next NCO appreciation will be held June 20.

Reservations for private parties and birthday parties with dance floor access are also available at Hashmarks.

"What the new advisory board is trying to do is to bring fun back to the club," said Master Gunnery Sgt. Anthony Russell, Marine Corps Communications-Electronics School Communications Chief

Course supervisor and Hashmarks advisory board president. "We want to make Hashmarks an exciting place to unwind."

Participation at the advisory board meeting is also highly encouraged, he added. The advisory board is open to any suggestions that will provide quality entertainment to the club's patrons. Every command is encouraged to send a Staff NCO as a representative.

Hashmarks is open from 4:30 to 10 p.m., Monday through Thursday, and 4:30 p.m. to 1 a.m., Friday and Saturday. The club is closed on Sundays and holidays, unless hosting a special event. For more information about Hashmarks, call 830-5035.



LANCE CPL. NICHOLAS M. DUNN

With the guidance of the new advisory board, Hashmarks is changing its customer venue.

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5:00	5:25	5:30	5:40	5:45	6:00	6:10	7:00	
15 MCAGCC-Palm Springs								Friday
Palm Springs Airport	Indian Canyon & Andreas (Casino)	Indian Canyon & Tacheva (Hospital)	Stater Bros WalMart	MCAGCC				
7:00	7:10	7:15	7:50	8:30				
15 MCAGCC-Palm Springs								Saturday/Sunday*
Base Post Exchange	Building 1664	Subway	29 Palms Community Center	29 Palms Staters	Joshua Tree Park Blvd.	Stater Bros WalMart	Palm Springs Airport	
10:00	10:25	10:30	10:40	10:45	11:00	11:10	11:45	
4:00	4:25	4:30	*4:40	*4:45	*5:00	*5:10	*5:45	
15 MCAGCC-Palm Springs								Saturday/Sunday*
Palm Springs Airport	Indian Canyon & Andreas (Casino)	Indian Canyon & Tacheva (Hospital)	Stater Bros WalMart	MCAGCC				
12:00	12:10	12:15	12:50	1:35				
*6:00	*6:10	*6:15	*6:50	*7:35				

*SUNDAY SERVICE BEGINS AT 29 PALMS COMMUNITY CENTER. All weekend service is for Saturday only except for the final return trip which includes both Saturday and Sunday service.

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Single Marine Program goes urban

CPL. NICOLE A. LAVINE
COMBAT CORRESPONDENT

The lights hanging above the pool tables illuminate dozens of hands and faces as people lean down to take well-aimed shots.

Crowds of people gather around three of the televisions in the lounge showing sports

and news.

A jukebox in the corner of the room is getting more than its share of attention and quarters.

You are not in the newest California club. You are in the Combat Center's very own Zone.

The Single Marine Program, one that organizes events specifically for single service

members, works hand-in-hand with the Zone recreational area.

Over the last two years, the SMP and Zone have seen some profound changes at the hands of the SMP coordinator, Lavonne Lessard.

Since the grand opening of the Zone's new movie earlier this year, the numbers of Marines and sailors who come in has more than tripled, said Lessard.

The new movie room has a dozen leather sofas, surround sound speakers and three plasma televisions mounted on the wall to give it a movie theater setting, said Lessard.

"The Marines have responded very positively to the changes," said Lessard.

In addition to the new movie room, the SMP committee recently agreed on a new theme for the entire internal décor of the Zone.

The walls have been painted black in anticipation of a new graffiti art theme, which will be painted by talented service members who turn in examples of their art work.

"We have so many talented Marines and sailors on this base," said Lessard. "It's good to offer this type of thing to our guys."

Service members interested in participating in the design of the Zone must turn in a full-color example of their art on an 8-by-11 inch piece of paper. All the paint for the project will be purchased by SMP.

SMP has also taken on management of the



CPL. NICOLE A. LAVINE

Lance Cpl. Tim W. Kinsey, forward observer with 1st Battalion, 11th Marine Regiment, plays a driving arcade game during his lunch break at the Zone Monday.

ENGINEERS, from A1

to pull water to the generator," said Flores who is from Lincolnshire, Ill.

The newly re-activated battalion, who began their seven-month deployment in April, started making friends early on this successful mission.

"This is one of our biggest missions after being re-activated,"

said Flores. "I was an instructor at engineer school seven months ago and most of these guys I taught. We're doing a great job so far for being such a young company."

The Iraqi contractors were extremely thankful for the young company of engineers, and the engineers responded with 265 highly explosive bangalore torpedoes to break through the limestone.

The bangalore torpedoes were

placed in approximately 70 pre-drilled holes in the bed of limestone that were created prior to the Marines arrival at the power plant.

In a quick sequence of explosive events, the bed of limestone that was impeding the Iraqi contractors' way was turned into a mound of broken up debris that the contractors could easily manage.

"Approximately half the area of the al-Anbar province will be sufficiently supplied with power once this project is done," said Haitham Al Hadithy, an Iraqi contractor in English.

The power plant project has been an ongoing project by Iraqi contractors and Coalition forces,

and has forged strong friendships between the two.

Before the Marines could part ways, the Iraqi contractors expressed their appreciation with a large feast for a job well done by the Marines. "Thank you for all your work," said Hadithy, to the Marines. "We will continue working on the generators to supply power to everyone."

Although this particular mission was accomplished, many more missions lay ahead for the Marines of Company A, 3rd CEB.

"We accomplished our mission, and now we can move on to the next one to help the Iraqis," said Flores.

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HOT TOPICS

PARKING LOT OF THE COMMANDING GENERAL'S BUILDING

The parking lot of the Commanding General's building, Building 1554, is clearly marked with 10 MPH speed limit signs and "No Through Traffic" signs. However motorists continually disregard the speed limit and use this parking lot for the purpose of cutting through to the adjacent streets. The only traffic authorized to park or travel in or through this parking lot are those people conducting business in buildings 1554, 1555 and 1559. All other motorists will be issued citations. Units conducting parade practice or otherwise using the parade deck will park in the parking lot across the open side of the parade deck that is adjacent to the Marine Corps Exchange.

MAIN GATE DELAYS

Due to a construction project at the main gate, motorists may expect minor delays May 14-25. During this period, the main gate will not close, however traffic maybe reduced to one lane for an extended time. For more information, call 830-5284.

ASYMCA SPAGHETTI DINNER AND SILENT AUCTION

There will be an Armed Services YMCA Spaghetti Dinner and Silent Auction May 16 from 5:30 to 8:30 p.m. at the Combat Center's Community Center. Dinner ticket prices are \$6 for adults and \$4 for children 4 to 12 years old. Children under 3 years old receive free admission. If you would like to donate to the silent auction, buy a ticket for dinner, or have questions, please call 830-7481 or visit Building 696 on base. All proceeds will benefit the ASYMCA Kid's Care Club. KCC is a program to help children learn the importance of helping in the community.

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Vista del Sol/801 residents have free access to Luckie Park Pool

RAYMON ZAPATA

HOUSING OFFICER

Your Marine Corps Community Services dollars comes full circle to our Marines and their families as an agreement is reached with the City Park and Recreation Department to provide Vista del Sol/801 residents free access to the Luckie Park pool this summer.

The pool pass will allow the families assigned to Vista del Sol Housing areas at Two Mile, Aztec and Joe Davis to utilize the pool at Luckie Park for free. The service member and, or their family member will need to present the pool pass along with a valid military ID card to the pool staff on the days the pool is open to the general public.

The pool passes are designed to allow 20 free swims, one key punch per family member. Families are asked

to return unused portions to the Housing Office so that they may be used by another family. However, families may keep their pass if they plan to use the pool again in the near future.

Luckie Park Pool will open on weekends beginning on May 24. The hours are from 1-5 p.m. daily. The pool will be open seven days a week starting June 14 through the end of August.

Beginning May 19, Vista del Sol residents will be able to pick up a pool pass at the Housing Office located in building 201 in the Two Mile housing area. Pool passes can be picked up between 10 a.m. - 1 p.m. daily Monday-Friday. If you have any additional questions on the pool passes, or housing questions in general, please call 361-6051/6158 or stop by and speak to one of the Housing staff members.

Campaign Stars to Adorn Afghanistan and Iraq Campaign Medals

U.S. DEPARTMENT OF DEFENSE

OFFICE OF THE ASSISTANT SECRETARY OF DEFENSE (PUBLIC AFFAIRS) NEWS RELEASE

The Department of Defense announced today that campaign stars are authorized for wear on the Afghanistan Campaign Medal (ACM) and Iraq Campaign Medal (ICM).

The campaign stars recognize a service member's participation in DoD designated campaigns in Afghanistan and Iraq.

Service members, who have qualified for the ACM or ICM, may display a bronze campaign star on their medal for each designated campaign phase in which they participated. The stars will be worn on the suspension and campaign ribbon of the campaign medal.

The three campaign phases and associated dates established for the ACM are:

- (1) Liberation of Afghanistan – Sep. 11, 2001 to Nov. 30, 2001.
- (2) Consolidation I – Dec. 1, 2001 to Sep. 30, 2006.
- (3) Consolidation II – Oct. 1, 2006 to a date to be determined.

The four campaign phases and associated dates established for the ICM are:

- (1) Liberation of Iraq – March 19, 2003 to May 1, 2003.
- (2) Transition of Iraq – May 2, 2003 to June 28, 2004.
- (3) Iraqi Governance – June 29, 2004 to Dec. 15, 2005.
- (4) National Resolution – Dec. 16, 2005 to a date to be determined.

Service members should contact their respective Military Departments for specific implementation guidance.



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Spouses learn the way of the Marine and sailor



CPL. NICOLE A. LAVINE

Several military wives stumble while racing through an obstacle course during a L.I.N.K.S. CAX session at Felix Field May 2.

CPL. NICOLE A. LAVINE
COMBAT CORRESPONDENT

When men and women decide to sign their name on the dotted line of a Marine Corps contract, they have accepted the expectations and responsibilities that await them during their time in service.

That is not the case for many military spouses who can be thrown into a frighteningly alien world of short-notice moves and seemingly bizarre customs.

The Lifestyles, Insights, Networking, Knowledge and Skills, or L.I.N.K.S. program, recognized the need to introduce

new spouses to the military lifestyle. L.I.N.K.S. mission is to make the Combat Center feel like home for these spouses.

The L.I.N.K.S. program hosted a semi-annual session called L.I.N.K.S. CAX, or L.I.N.K.S. Combined Arms Exercise, at Felix Field May 2.

The session included periods of instruction covering various topics such as uniforms, rank structure, standards of dress while on base, military benefits, changing duty stations, chains of command, unit missions, retirement and much more.

The L.I.N.K.S. program has been helping Combat Center

spouses cope with changes and deployments for more than 10 years, said Jennifer Sutton, a L.I.N.K.S. trainer.

The CAX sessions, which take place once in spring and once in autumn, are used as tools to introduce unfamiliar spouses to the different aspects of military life, added Sutton, a Philadelphia, native.

"It's basically a program that introduces spouses into the Marine Corps," she said. "It can be overwhelming when you come into such a different community and culture."

Christina Roloson, wife of Gunnery Sgt. Aarond Roloson from Bravo Company, Marine Corps Communication-Electronics School, agreed.

"It's so different," said Roloson about military lifestyle. "Mostly, the new spouses have no military experience and don't know things like where to go if their husband's pay gets messed up. This is awesome. It's like a key to unlock this mystery."

Roloson added she believes Marines' and sailors' lives will become easier if their wives develop a better understanding of the obligations made of them in the military.

To give wives a more accurate idea of what their husbands do in the field, the wives ate Meals, Ready-to-Eat for lunch. They learned how to use the heat packets and the value of having food

others want to trade with.

After lunch, representatives from the Natural Resources and Environmental Affairs Division, range safety and the Explosive Ordinance Disposal team briefed the wives prior to their trip to Range 215, a mock Iraqi village used in Mojave Viper pre-deployment training, a month-long evolution.

Seeing the mock Iraqi village and Marines in a training environment was the highlight of the day for many wives.

"I really liked getting into the 7-ton [truck]," said Nicole Rash, wife of Cpl. Anthony Rash, Alpha Company, Headquarters Battalion, and native of Boise, Idaho. "It was very hands-on."

Adrienne Baker, wife of Sgt. Bryan Baker, food service special-

ist, Alpha Company, Headquarters Battalion, agreed.

"To see what they are talking about when they come home makes you feel like you are at least a part of it," said Baker, a Yucca Valley, Calif., native.

At the end of the day, all wives were presented a certificate of completion for the CAX.

The certificates make it possible for the wives to become monitors for the L.I.N.K.S. program no matter where they may go, said Amber Bilderain, L.I.N.K.S. administrative assistant.

L.I.N.K.S. holds sessions every month, including evening, day, weekend and unit sessions.

For a schedule of events, visit <http://www.29palms.usmc.mil>. To learn more about L.I.N.K.S., call 830-1696.



CPL. NICOLE A. LAVINE

Wives watch Marines and sailors with 3rd Battalion, 7th Marine Regiment, as they commence in Mojave Viper training at Range 215 May 2.



CAMP FALLUJAH, Iraq
Cpl. German E. Jarquin, 21, postal clerk, Combat Logistics Brigade 8, 2nd Force Service Support Group (Forward) and Miami, Fla., native unloads a container of mail and sorts packages.
Photo by: Lance Cpl. Aaron P. Mankin



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OWENS, from A1

major, Combat Center Band. "I knew right off the bat that he was focused, what he stood for, and that he was a good Marine," said Szabo. Owens, then a sergeant, was Szabo's student at the Armed Forces School of Music, Naval

Amphibious Base, Norfolk, Va., and was attending the Ceremonial Conductor / Drum Major Course. Sadly, Owens, a native of Ferron, Utah, was killed in a motorcycle accident May 1, in Joshua Tree, Calif., at the intersection of Sunburst Circle and Twentynine Palms Highway. Owens, who served as the

Combat Center's drum major from August 2001 through October 2003, returned to the Combat Center band March 28 after serving as the drum major for the Quantico Marine Band. Szabo, who had known Owens for 10 years, remembered him for his sincerity. "I appreciated that sincerity," said Szabo. "You knew he wasn't going to tell you what you wanted to hear, but what you needed to hear." Sgt. Jose A. Grajeda, clarinetist and assistant drum major, Combat Center band, also remembered Owens' sincerity. "He was locked on," said Grajeda. "He was straight to the point and honest." Szabo said Owens' reputation as a squared-away Marine made

him the model for both young and seasoned Marines. "He had a commanding presence, that was not cocky but confident," said Szabo. "He brought accountability, not only to his subordinates but to his superiors." Grajeda, who served under Owens during his first tour with the Combat Center band, immediately noticed the influence Owens' return had over the band's young Marines. "The whole unit's morale skyrocketed as soon as he got here, and they didn't even know him yet," said Grajeda. Grajeda said the morale-boost helped lift the band's performance. "One of his favorite sayings was 'I'm not perfect, but I will always strive for perfection,'" said

Grajeda. "He wasn't asking [the band] for perfection, but everyone gave it to him." While Owens was remembered as a "Marine's Marine", Szabo also remembered his humor. "He added a sense of humor to the chemistry of the unit," said Szabo. Grajeda, who has been in contact with Marines who knew Owens throughout his career, shared some of their stories. One fond memory of Owens shared by many Marines was when he wore overalls during his performance of The Duelling Banjos at the East Coast Musician's Conference. When Owens wasn't being the model of a squared-away Marine, teaching or joking around, he occupied himself by helping Marines with anything including moving, transporting car-less Marines, acting as a free marriage counseling service and even as a sleeve rolling instructor, said Grajeda.

On May 2, the night of Combat Center band's "Colors of Red and Blue" performance, Warrant Officer Stephen B. Giove, band officer, Marine Corps Air Ground Combat Center Band, and close friend of Owens reflected on Owens influence. Giove was proud of the strength and discipline displayed by his Marines that night, and credited that discipline to Owens' influence and example. "The show must go on," said Giove. "That's what he would have wanted." Owens is survived by his wife, Charla, and two children, Jordan, 20, and McKenzie, 9. A memorial service is scheduled for 10 a.m. May 20 at the Protestant Chapel.

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<p>St. Joseph of Arimathea Episcopal Church Just the Best place to get Married Father Ian Hanley Sunday School, Holy Eucharist 11:30 A.M. Onaga at Church St., Y.V. 365-7133</p>	<p>Yucca Valley Church of Religious Science Healing Lives & Building Dreams Reverend Ron Scott Sunday Celebration & Junior Church 10 AM 7434 Bannock Trail, Yucca Valley 365-2205 yvcrs.org</p>	<p>United Methodist Church of Twentynine Palms 6250 Mesquite Springs Road Phone: 367-7338 Sunday School: 8:30 a.m. - Worship: 9:30 a.m. (Child Care Provided) Pastor Beth Glass "open hearts, open minds, open doors"</p>	<p>FIRST CHRISTIAN CHURCH 365-4014 SUNDAY Bible School.....9:30am Worship.....10:45am WEDNESDAY Bible Study.....7pm</p>	
<p>Yucca Valley 57273 Onaga Tr., 365-3671 The United Methodist Church Sunday Classes for All Ages - 9:30 AM Worship 10:30 AM (Child Care Available) Bible Study: Mon., 10:30 AM; Wed., 7:00 PM</p>	<p>Good Shepherd Lutheran Church (Missouri Synod) WORSHIP SERVICE 9:00 AM SUNDAY SCHOOL 10:30 AM WE PREACH CHRIST RISEN 59077 Yucca Trail, Yucca Valley CHURCH: 365-2548 Preschool & Daycare: 369-9590</p>	<p>Desert Hills Presbyterian Church 56750 Mountain View Trail Yucca Valley • 365-6331 Worship Service 10:00 A.M. Child Care, Bible Studies, Youth, Choir A Friendly and Loving Congregation!</p>	<p>First Southern Baptist Church Sun. Worship 10:45am • 6:00pm Sun. Bible Study 9:30am 1 st. Wed. Potluck 6:00pm Wed. Bible Study 7:00pm 6088 Sunset Road JT (760) 366-9211</p>	
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3/11 awards Bronze Star to fire support coordinator

LANCE CPL. NICHOLAS M. DUNN

COMBAT CORRESPONDENT

The Marines and sailors of Headquarters and Kilo Batteries, 3rd Battalion, 11th Marine Regiment, stand rigidly at attention in formation as one of their own is called in front to report to the commanding officer.

Capt. David L. Padilla, 3/11 fire support coordinator, was awarded the Bronze Star Medal May 1 during a promotions and awards ceremony held at 3/11's headquarters building.

Padilla, a Manila, Philippines, native, earned the medal for his actions as a Border Transition Team operations officer while deployed to Iraq's western border area March 2, 2007 to Feb. 27.

While deployed, Padilla and his team were responsible for training, mentoring and advising the staff of the Iraqi 5th Brigade, 2nd Region, Department of Border Enforcement.

"The previous Iraqi military functioned under a centralized command and control," said Padilla. "We wanted to influence the staff to function in the absence of central leadership to meet the commander's intent. The two basic things we focused on were leadership and having a functional staff."

In addition to training the brigade staff, Padilla's team also worked alongside the Iraqi soldiers, patrolling and securing approximately 500 miles of the Iraqi-Syrian border.

"Every day, we went out with our Iraqi counterparts," he said. "While we patrolled, we were also teaching them basic military skills."

Padilla said the BTT wasted no time in teaching their assigned brigade basic military common skills. The Marines taught the Iraqis proper patrol techniques, small-unit tactics, marksmanship fundamentals, weapons handling and maintenance, and many other aspects of Marine Corps training.

Born May 12, 1969, in the Philippines, Padilla became a naturalized citizen after coming to the United States at age 11.

After graduating high school in Harpursville, N.Y., Padilla enlisted in the Navy. He received an hon-



LANCE CPL. NICHOLAS M. DUNN

Lt. Col. James C. Lewis, commanding officer, 3rd Battalion, 11th Marine Regiment, presents Capt. David L. Padilla, 3/11 fire support coordinator, with the Bronze Star Medal during a promotions and awards ceremony May 1 at 3/11's headquarters building.

orable discharge in 1991 and attended Troy State University in Alabama. During his tenure at the school, Padilla was also an active reservist in the Navy.

In January 1998, Padilla was recruited by the Marine Corps. He was commissioned as a second lieutenant after attending Officer Candidate School at Marine Corps Base Quantico, Va., in April 1998.

Upon his graduation from The

Basic School in October 1998, Padilla was sent to the Artillery Officer's Basic Course in Fort Sill, Okla., where he graduated the following April.

His first assignment was to Romeo Battery, 5th Battalion, 10th Marine Regiment, at Marine Corps Base Camp Lejeune, N.C. There, he served as a forward

See BRONZE, A10

Employee Spotlight



Employee: Stephen D. Selser
Employer: Natural Resources and Environmental Affairs
Title: Biological Science Technician

Job Duties: Dealing with wildlife related issues, responding to wildlife related calls and incidents, rehabilitation of injured animals.

Hometown: Portland, Ore.

Hobbies: Golf, hiking, fishing, hunting, softball, watching movies and spending time with my wife.

What do you like most about your job: I enjoy working with the Marines, and wildlife calls where I get to handle and deal with the animals.

Significant achievements since coming to MCAGCC: Developing wildlife and evasive species management plans.

Military service: Four years in the Navy

Time on base: One and a half years

CHRISTIAN WORSHIP

Faith Lessons During Lunch

On May 8 a DVD series titled "Faith Lessons" on the Promised Land Crossroads of the World 1. The lessons will be held every Thursday from 12 to 1 p.m. in building 1651. This DVD series features teacher and historian Ray Vander Laan who tells stories from the actual locations of where these events occurred. He will not be asking anyone at any time to give financially, or to attend any specific church or synagogue. If you have ever wanted to go on tour to the Holy Land, but haven't done it yet, this is the next best thing. If you have any questions, please call 830-6187.

Roman Catholic Services Immaculate Heart of Mary Chapel

Sun 7:30 a.m. Rosary
Sun 8 a.m. Catholic Mass*
Sun 9 a.m. Military Council of Catholic Women (Bldg 1551)
Sun 9 a.m. Faith Formation/CCD (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 p.m. Life Teen/Youth Grp.
Sun 4:30 p.m. Rosary
Sun 5 p.m. Catholic Mass
Sun 6 p.m. Cyrus Young Adult Group age 18-35, married or single
(3rd Sunday of the month)
Fri 12:15 - 4:30 p.m. Exposition/ Adoration
Most Blessed Sacrament (1st Friday Each Month)

Holy Days of Obligation Masses

12:30 p.m. Immaculate Heart of Mary Chapel

Non-denominational Christian Service Christ Chapel

Sun 8 a.m. Sunday School*
Sun 9 a.m. Worship*
Wed 7 p.m. Praise & Worship*

Wed. Bible Study: 7 p.m.

Protestant Liturgical Service Christ Chapel

Sun 11 a.m. Worship

Lay-Led Independent Baptist Service Christ Chapel

Sun 11 a.m. Worship
Lay-Led Gospel Service
Christ Chapel
Sun 12:30 p.m. Worship

Midweek Events

Monday Immaculate Heart of Mary Chapel

Mon-Fri 11:45 a.m. Catholic Mass

Tuesday Immaculate Heart of Mary Chapel

5-7:30 p.m. Catechist Meeting (2nd Tues. of the month)
6 p.m. Baptism Class 1st Tuesday each Month

Wednesday Village Center

11:30 a.m. Prayer Meeting in the Prayer Room contact Chaplain Flint 830-6187
6 p.m. RCIA, building 1551

Christ Chapel

5:30 p.m. Catholic Choir Rehearsal

6 p.m. Praise & Worship Rehearsal

6 p.m. Pre-Service Food/Fellowship

7 p.m. Lay-Led Gospel Bible Study

7 p.m. Praise & Worship Service.

1st Thursday each month
7 p.m. Knights of Columbus Legend

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+Appointments can be made for Confessions, call 830-6456 or 830-6646

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LANCE CPL. ZACHARY J. NOLA

Second baseman Jerry L. Watkins, Marine Corps Communication-Electronics School Team #2 tags out Willie Campbell during intramural softball action May 9. MCCES #2 won the game 12-10.

Commanding General's Softball Scores and Standings

Week of May 5-8

Monday's Scores:

CLB-7 18 VMU-2 8
ESD 21 G-6 6
1/7 19 MCCES #3 8
MCCES #1 21 3rd LAR 6
PMO 12 TANKS 7
3/11 24 MCTOG 7

Tuesday's Scores:

1/7 23 HQBN 9
Tanks 5 MCCES#2 4
TTECG 13 MCTOG 3
G-6 10 3rd LAR 5
Tanks 12 MWSS-374 7
VMU 13 Medical 5

Wednesday's Scores:

1/7 9 CMA 6
PMO 7 3/11 2
TTECG 28 Medical 6
MCCES #1 22 MCTOG 5
CLB-7 24 MCCES #3 5
HQBN 6 MTU 5

Thursday's Scores:

MCCES #2 12 HQBN 10
ESD 16 CMA 4
TTECG 10 Mojave Viper 1
1/7 17 G-6 0
MCCES #1 12 VMU-1 2
1/7 28 MTU 3

TEAM	WINS	LOSSES
1. MCCES #1	8	0
2. 1/7	6	0
3. CLB-7	5	0
4. PMO	5	1
5. Tanks	5	1
6. 3/11	4	1
7. AAV's #1	3	1
8. AAV's #2	3	1
9. ESD	5	2
10. TTECG	5	2
11. Mojave Viper	4	2
12. MCCES #2	3	3
13. VMU-1	3	4
14. CMA	2	3
15. MTU	2	5
16. AAV's #3	1	2
17. MCTOG	1	5
18. MCCES #3	1	6
19. MEDICAL	1	6
20. HQBN GAMECOCKS	1	6
21. G-6	1	7
22. MWSS-374	0	5
23. 3RD LAR	0	6



LANCE CPL. ZACHARY J. NOLA

John S. McCalmont, Marine Corps Communication-Electronics School Team #2 chases down a hard hit ground ball during MCCES #2's 12-10 win over Headquarters Battalion.

BRONZE, from A9

observer, Headquarters Platoon commander, Guns Platoon commander, liaison officer, assistant executive officer, and finally as the battery's executive officer.

Padilla left Romeo Battery for the 31st Marine Expeditionary Unit in Okinawa, Japan, in June 2001, where he acted as the training and targeting information officer. After approximately eight months, he became the fire support officer and unit training manager for the MEU.

While serving on the 31st MEU, Padilla was tasked with becoming the III Marine Expeditionary Brigade commanding general's aide-de-camp.

"That was a great job," he said, recalling his tour as aide-de-camp. "I learned a lot from both of the generals I worked for. They were both outstanding leaders.

"What I learned most was their genuine concern for their Marines," added Padilla. "It's all about the Marines themselves and the families of the Marines.

That's why we do what we do – that and love for the Corps."

Padilla carried those principles on with him to 3/11 and to Iraq's western border. He said he and the BTT trained the Iraqis as if they were training their fellow Marines. For his actions while serving as the BTT operations officer, Padilla was awarded the Bronze Star Medal.

"Yeah, I received the Bronze Star, but I consider this a team effort," said Padilla. "I was fortunate to have had the leadership and to work with Marines who were consistent with accomplishing the mission.

"Training foreign military is something you'll always remember and you can always look back to," he added. "I was just happy to be a part of that team. The bottom line is that it is an individual award, but it took the whole team to accomplish the mission."

Others among the BTT feel Padilla's positive attitude and dedication toward his mission while deployed with the team also helped them achieve success.

"Our operational tempo was very high," said Lt. Col. Stefan

Bien, executive officer of the 13th MEU at Marine Corps Base Camp Pendleton, Calif. "Being the operations officer, he was responsible for the planning, coordination and execution of all our missions. He did a fantastic job, and I felt he should be appropriately recognized for that.

"I can't say enough about his knowledge of Marine Corps operations," he added. "The mission was very challenging and he handled it very well."

His leadership, professionalism and devotion to duty in garrison have not gone unnoticed by his peers in 3/11 either.

"Capt. Padilla is an exceptional officer," said Lt. Col. James C. Lewis, 3/11 battalion commander. "The award he received is a testament to his professionalism and dedication, and to those on his team as well."

Padilla will transfer to Headquarters Marine Corps in Quantico to work for Manpower and Reserve Affairs. Through his dedication and leadership, he will prepare himself and his fellow Marines for any future challenges they may face.

SMP, from A4

Combat Center mainside courtesy shuttle service, which shuttles between 300 and 500 Marines per day, said Lessard.

Organized SMP weekend trips, holiday events, competitions and activities give Marines and sailors a chance to unwind and socialize.

The SMP events entertain the staff as much as the single Marines and sailors themselves.

"We have so much fun when we go on our trips," said Jan "G-ma" Mason, recreation assistant. "They're my family. I think they give me more than I have given them."

Some single service members, like Lance Cpl. Russel W. Johnson, visit the Zone on a regular basis due to the impact it has had on their social lives.

"I come for the social aspect," said Johnson, Bravo Company, Marine Corps Communication-Electronics School and Baltimore native.

Johnson added he visits the Zone frequently during the week and makes it a point to bring

friends along.

"I believe in bonding and camaraderie," he said. "You get to know each other and that's a really good thing."

Although SMP and the Zone may have regular or seasonal events, new trips and events are added to the SMP calendar regularly.

For a full schedule of this month's SMP events and activities, call 830-4767 or visit their Web site at <http://www.mccs29plans.com/pages/smp.htm>.

Editor's note: The Commanding General's intent is to provide an environment for Marines and Sailors to relax, socialize and interact with each other in an off duty capacity.

As the Zone was established with and is supported by Single Marine Program funds, effective immediately, the Zone patronage is limited to active duty and reserve service members on active orders only.

All patrons will be expected to have a valid Armed Forces identification card with them while frequenting the facility. The Zone is an alcohol free establishment.

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Combat Center Trader Ads

AUTOMOTIVE

2004 JEEP WRANGLER X SPRT 6 Cyl, 4 ltr, 5 spd, 4WD, hardtop (soft available) new tires, no accidents, 53K, Great shape. All maintenance records. Kelly blue book, \$14,600-15,500. Asking 14K. (559) 904-7326 5/14/08

2002 FLSTC HARLEY-DAVIDSON® Heritage Softail Classic, luxury blue with stripe, under 4,400 miles. Accessories included, excellent condition. \$14k Call 221-8831 5/14/08

ATV 50CC KAZUMA 2005 \$400 OBO Call Chris at (760) 362-5293 5/7/08

2007 SUZUKI 90 ATV/QUAD brand new only used three time less than 10 hours, garaged, very well maintained, ridden by daughter, green sticker up to date (\$1500) 285-1603. 5/7/08

1964 CHEVY TRUCK. 400 small block, 700R4 trans. Edelbrock intake, carb, headers, flowmaster exhaust. Less than 10K miles on rebuilt eng/trans setup. \$6,500. Call Tom. (240) 256-0545. 5/7/08

2006 YAMAHA 125 TTR MOTORCYCLE almost brand new, garaged, very well maintained, ridden by daughter, green sticker up to date (\$1200) 285-1603 5/7/08

2004 HONDA 70 MOTOR-CYCLE low hours/miles, garaged very well maintained, green sticker up to date (\$1000) 285-1603. 5/7/08

2007 POLARIS 500 SPORTSMAN EFI 4X4 green (ATV/quad) less than 50 hours/low miles, garaged, very well maintained, green sticker up to date, ridden by wife (\$5000) 285-1603 5/7/08

2003 NISSAN MAXIMA, WHITE PEARL, EXCELLENT CONDITION, \$7,000 Call Nick at 953-7928. 4/23/08

MOTOR HOME FOR SALE 1991 PACE ARROW. 35 ft. class A. 460 Ford/Oshkosh many extras. 61,000 miles. \$19,500. OBO. Call Jon at 361-5777. 4/23/08

AUTOMOTIVE MOTOR HOME FOR SALE 1995 REXHAUL AERBUS 33 FT. CLASS A. Ford 460 engine, new trans. w/ warranty, new brakes, fuel Pump, + more, 44,000 miles. \$22,500. Call Joe at 368-1275 4/23/08

MISC.

NINTENDO WII numb chucks, 2 controllers, sports game. \$210 OBO. A savings of over \$75. Call Kris 880-6224 5/14/08

ABSOLUTELY ADORABLE PIT/SHEP MIX. First set of shots, 8 weeks old \$350. Contact Brittany 368-1275 5/7/08

GARAGE SALE! This Saturday and Sunday from 7 a.m. to 4 p.m. at 72672 Sullivan Rd., Twentynine Palms. Will be selling a Valley pool table for \$600, a refrigerator, great clothes, kitchen ware and much more! 5/7/08

SCHWINN STATIONARY EXERCISE BIKE, like new, hardly used. \$150 OBO. (760) 361-1209. 5/7/08

JOSHUA SPRINGS SCHOOL UNIFORMS. Approx 12 medium (10-12) collared shirts, and several size 8 trousers. Some never worn. Make offer. Call Tom. (240) 256-0545. 5/7/08

CHAIN LINK FENCE for base housing back yard. Approx 100 linear feet with 1 gate. You disassemble, \$150, I disassemble \$200. Call Tom. (240) 256-0545. 5/7/08

SCHWINN ORANGE COUNTY CHOPPERS STING-RAY BIKES (2) 20 inch (1 red, 1 blue) (1) 16 inc red \$75 each or OBO Call Chris at (760) 362-5293 5/7/08

2 GOLDEN RETRIEVERS. Free to good home: 3 yrs old each. Registered, neutered. Never been apart, love kids! Call (760) 285-1603 5/7/08

The deadline for submitting Trader ads is noon Wednesday, the week prior to publication.

Trader Ad Forms are available at the Public Affairs Office and may be filled out during normal working hours at Bldg. 1417.

Ads may also be submitted through e-mail, but will only be accepted from those with an @usmc.mil address. If you are active duty, retired military or a family member and do not have an @usmc.mil address you can go to the PAO page of the base

Web site at: <http://www.29palms.usmc.mil/dirs/pao/> and complete a request to publish an ad.

The limitations for ads are: there is a 15-word limit, limit of two ads per household and the Trader may be used only

for noncommercial classified ads containing items of personal property offered by and for individuals authorized to use this service. Such ads must represent incidental exchanged not of sustained business nature.

Ads for housing rentals will not be considered for the Combat Center Trader.

To have a "House For Sale" ad run in the Observation Post, applicants must provide Permanent Change of Station orders and have the ad

approved by Base Housing. This ensures the Combat Center Trader is not used for commercial real estate endeavors.

Ads are run on a first-come, first-serve, space available basis. If you have questions please call 830-3762.

OEF, from A1

Government of the Islamic Republic of Afghanistan during security, stability and regional development.

Although the unit hasn't yet received all the equipment and personnel it needs to be fully operationally capable, the battalion commander said his Marines and sailors have embraced their mission and are committed to achieving success.

The battalion has demonstrated its readiness to help bolster the ANP and shown that it will not allow minor setbacks to interfere with mission accomplishment.

The battalion is currently operating in the initial phase of a 210-day deployment.

"We've started our mission and have reaped positive results. The people were thankful for us coming to address their needs, and very surprised in knowing that we have come from so far away to help improve their quality of life," Hall said. "We will continue to increase our influence throughout this region in the coming days."

A huge benefit for the Marines was gaining support from the ANP's regional and corps commanders to enable operations in the nine districts, two provinces and two regions in which the Marines will operate. Although Hall said his Marines are "starting from scratch," he is confident that they will draw from the lessons they learned during 2/7's support of Operation Iraqi Freedom.

The battalion returned to Twentynine Palms in September 2007 after serving seven months in Fallujah, Iraq, and surrounding areas.

After forging a bond with the ANP, Hall hosted a "shura," or meeting, with the village elders of the Golestan District — a remote and austere mountainous location in western Afghanistan.

"I think the meeting served as a good introduction for both of us. They seemed pretty positive and receptive, and labeled out in order what their concerns were," said Capt. Victor A. Lomuscio, commander, Company G, 2/7.

Once the battalion is fully operational, Hall will send a platoon of Marines from Golf Company to the Golestan area. These Marines, along with the ANP, are responsible for providing added security to the Golestan area, while 2/7 engages in various civil affairs projects to enhance quality of life for local residents. Lomuscio, a Shelter Island, N.Y., native, will lead this effort.

Following the "shura," the battalion commander realized that most of the focus was on the availability of medical care, school property and equipment, village infrastructure and security. Hall said he was surprised at how frugal the requests were, but was pleased to know his unit will be able to assist the Afghans in a number of ways.

In addition to working with the ANP and addressing the needs of the Afghan people, 2/7 will also coordinate their efforts with other supporting agencies. In addition to the ANP, the Marines were also accompanied by Spanish and Italian troops, other U.S. service members, members of the International Security Assistance Force, Afghanistan Regional Security Integration Command West, Regional Command West and Police Mentoring Team.

"No sooner did we finish the

'shura,' we started patrolling," Hall said. "It was truly a combined joint patrol, and it proved to our alliance partners how committed we are to this mission."

The patrol also helped instill confidence in the ANP. Hall and his team of staff officers were impressed by the tactics displayed by the ANP during the combat patrol. The ANP has gotten stronger, and Lomuscio said it will get even better when his Marines start training with them.

"I'm confident that we've made a positive effect in the area that needs it," Lomuscio said. "The potential to do a lot of things is amazing. I think we'll really leave a positive impact on the Golestan Valley."

Before departing the area, the Marines also met with the Physical Reconstruction Team which specializes in civil military operations. The PRT also provides humanitarian assistance, medical support, digs wells, and provides other services that are geared toward improving quality of life for the Afghan people.

The primary concern, however, is laying blacktop roads. The Marines think it's a good idea, and the battalion commander is focused on making it happen.

"Blacktopping the roads will have a direct impact on the peo-

ple," Hall said. "It will also work to create more credibility for the government and provide legal employment opportunities by adding to the local economy. It also directly correlates to the Afghan government meeting the needs of its people."

The battalion is working the road plans and other civil affairs projects through the Commanders Emergency Response Program, which is designed to enable local commanders in Iraq and Afghanistan to respond to urgent humanitarian relief and reconstruction requirements within their areas of responsibility by carrying out programs that will immediately assist the indigenous population. With CERP assistance,

commanders are authorized to pay for services in such areas as water sanitation, food production and distribution, agriculture, electricity, healthcare, education, and transportation.

"We're working through all the friction so any follow-on forces will have something to build upon," Hall said. "We're making things happen."

The task at hand is not easy, and the commander is fully aware of this. The Marines know there's a six-month road ahead of them, but they're anxious and willing to go the distance. Surely, there's only so much 2/7 can accomplish in 210 days, but the Marines and sailors are "Ready for All; Yielding to None."

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BINGO

night



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BINGO NIGHT DETAILS, 830.6610

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 Call Tina Schmitz at 830.3227 ext.272. to reserve by May 13th.

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Friday, May 16 at 7:30 a.m.






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