

OBSERVATION POST

MARINE CORPS AIR GROUND COMBAT CENTER

JULY 31, 2009

SERVING THE TWENTYNINE PALMS COMMUNITY SINCE 1957

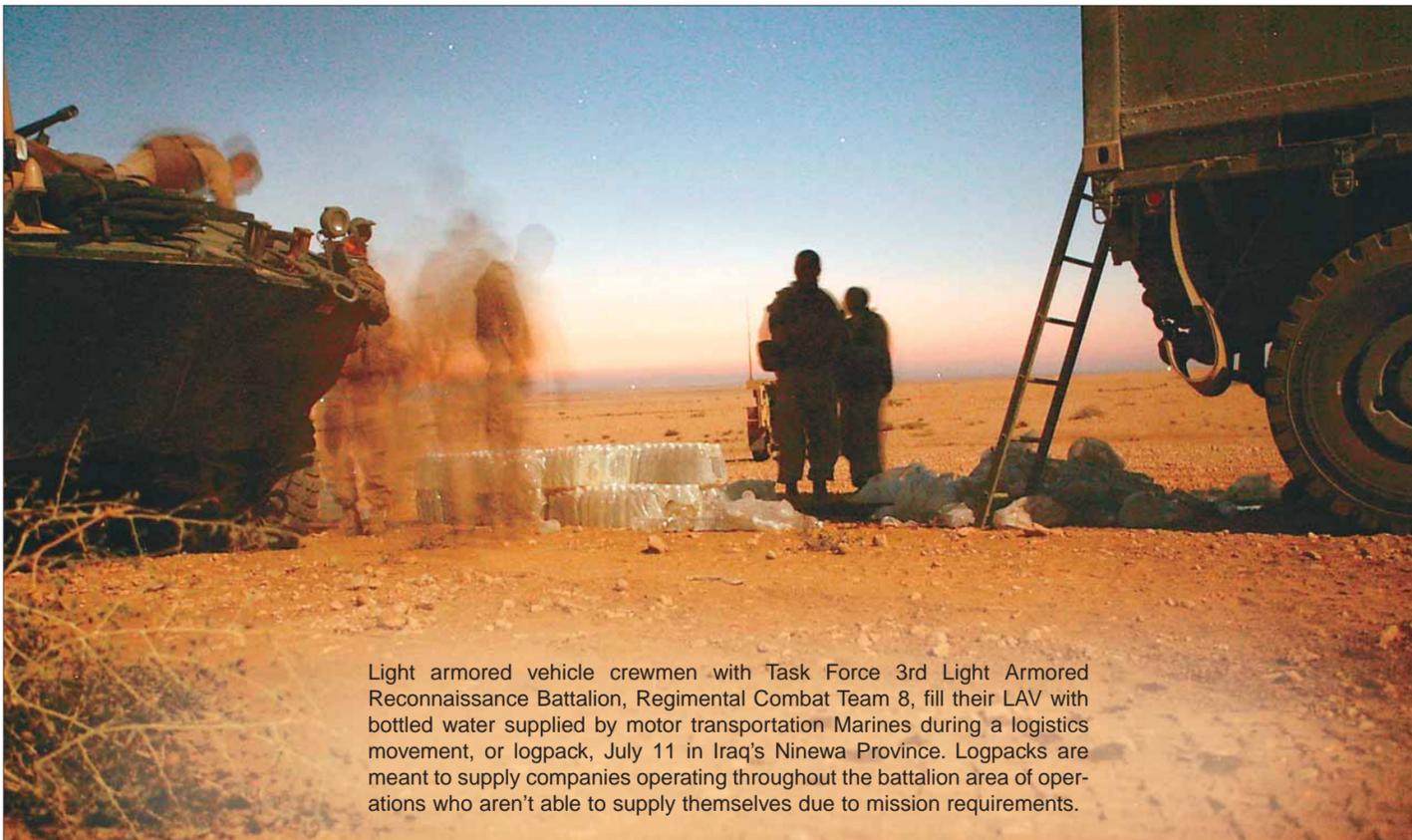
VOL. 52 ISSUE 30

Wolfpack Motor T uses team effort to complete logpacks

Retention clock is ticking

CPL. R. LOGAN KYLE

COMBAT CORRESPONDENT



Light armored vehicle crewmen with Task Force 3rd Light Armored Reconnaissance Battalion, Regimental Combat Team 8, fill their LAV with bottled water supplied by motor transportation Marines during a logistics movement, or logpack, July 11 in Iraq's Ninewa Province. Logpacks are meant to supply companies operating throughout the battalion area of operations who aren't able to supply themselves due to mission requirements.

SGT. ERIC C. SCHWARTZ

REGIMENTAL COMBAT TEAM 8

NINEWA PROVINCE, Iraq – Whenever Marines are away from any forward operating base, there are others who work to keep them fed, fully clad and their vehicles supplied with

parts to keep them on the move. This arduous but important task is completed by Marines who know that as long as their Marines need supplies, there is no distance they can't cover to bring the much needed items to those Marines who need them most.

Marines with the motor trans-

portation section, Headquarters and Service Company, Task Force 3rd Light Armored Reconnaissance Battalion, Regimental Combat Team 8, constantly rotate through logistics movements, or "logpacks," bringing needed supplies to companies operating throughout the bat-

tion's area of operations.

"Our main job is to bring supplies to the line companies," said Sgt. Evangelos Chimonas, a convoy commander with the motor transportation section. "They have no other way to

See WOLFPACK, A3

Marines aboard the Combat Center and throughout the Corps, who have not pulled the trigger on re-enlisting in their military occupational specialty, may soon see their opportunity fade away.

Fiscal year 2010 will be a tough year for re-enlistment, said Staff Sgt. Xavicus T. Gayden, the career planner for Headquarters Battalion.

"So far there are more than 20 MOSs that have boatspace submissions at 50 percent or higher," said Gayden, a Monroe, La., native. "That means the amount of spaces available in that MOS is down to a handful."

According to the Manpower and Reserve Affairs' enlisted retention survey, conducted Jan. 19 to April 10, about 46 percent of Marines are prepared to reenlist in 2010, up four percent from 2009. Another 15 percent remain on the fence, down two percent.

The remaining 39 percent said they had no intentions of staying in the Corps, also down two

See RETENTION, A4



BY LESLIE SHAW

JED reminds Marines to jam IEDs

CPL. R. LOGAN KYLE

COMBAT CORRESPONDENT

Personnel from Naval Air Weapons Station China Lake, Calif., came to the Combat Center Wednesday and Thursday to produce an instructional training video for the Jammer Effectiveness Device, a piece of equipment used to help remind Marines to turn on the improvised explosive device jammers equipped in all humvees.

"A lot of Marines see the JED while out training in the ranges and don't know what it is," said John Surmi, an engi-

neer for the NAWS Weapons Division. "What this device does is let TTECG [Tactical Training Exercise Control Group] instructors know if the Marines are utilizing their counter radio-controlled IED electronic warfare systems, or simply, CREW systems."

The CREW system, first implemented in 2003, is a device that can be attached to vehicles and fixed locations to prevent or defeat IED threats by jamming detonation frequencies, he said.

From July 2003 to July 2007, more than 1,500 coalition deaths in Iraq were

caused by IEDs, he said. Since the implementation of the CREW system, less than 300 coalition deaths were caused by IEDs.

Gunnery Sgt. Stephen T. Wozniak, the electronic warfare chief with TTECG, said Marines need to start paying attention to the JEDs while going through Enhanced Mojave Viper.

"It's better for Marines to go ahead and begin using their CREW systems now in a training environment," Wozniak said. "When they get overseas saving Marines' lives can be as easy as a flip of a switch."

RTAMS repairs roads less traveled

CPL. NICOLE A. LAVINE

COMBAT CORRESPONDENT

Marines and civilians at the Range/Training Area Maintenance Section rise early each day to ensure

Combat Center ranges and range roads are in working condition for training units.

RTAMS is responsible for repairing, rebuilding and maintaining more than

300 miles of dirt roads, four impact area ranges and numerous live-fire training areas used by units training in Enhanced Mojave Viper, a month-long, pre-deployment training package.

Although the RTAMS team consists of 14 civilians and more than 40 Marines, the mission demands consistent attention and hard labor, said Mark Carrington, the RTAMS officer in charge.

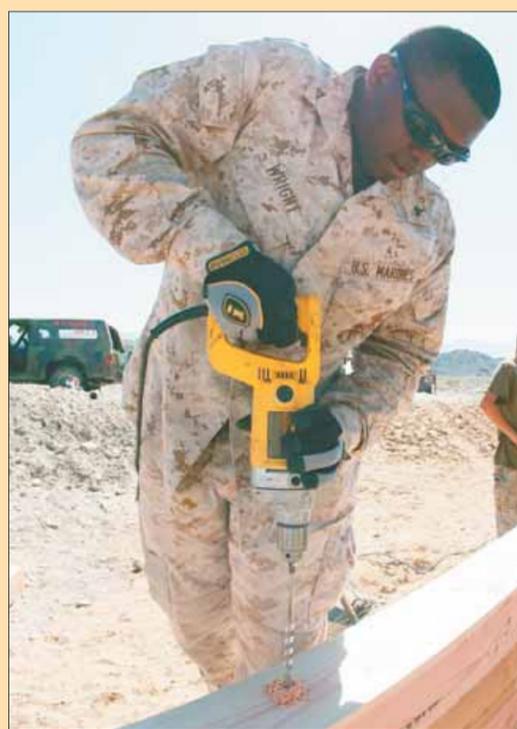
Steve Tygart, an RTAMS heavy equipment operator, has been doing this work for 25 years, and says he still enjoys every aspect of it.

"You never do the same thing," Tygart said about his day-to-day obligations. "There is always something new and something challenging."

Carrington explained why RTAMS rarely has a quiet day at the office.

"We replace wire, targets, tire targets, sand targets, Hescos [structures made from collapsible boxes filled with sand] –you name it," said the retired master sergeant from Baton Rouge, La.

See RTAMS, A8



CPL. NICOLE A. LAVINE

Lance Cpl. Erving Wright, a maintenance administration clerk with the Range/Training Maintenance Section, drills lumber to help rebuild a bunker Tuesday after it burned down at Range 410A.



Only fools don't 'rush' in ~ See A3



More than a K-9 to 5 job See A5



Afflicted with gratitude See B1



Not a last resort See B1

Semper Moto

A Little PM May Save Your Life

JOHN FLEMING

It is amazing how many motorcyclists are riding around with significant maintenance issues. One of the most frequent problems is low tire pressure. A low tire can have serious consequences if not attended to.

A tire failure on a motorcycle is a considerably more dangerous event than a blowout on your typical automobile. A flat tire on your car? No problem. Pull off to the side of the ride and change to your spare. But with a motorcycle, it's a whole different deal.

First of all, a tire failure on a motorcycle can seriously impact your ability to control the bike. And secondly, very few motorcycles carry spare tires. So if you survive a tire failure, you're still going to be stranded by the side of the road.

Fortunately, this unpleasantness can usually be avoided by simply maintaining proper tire pressures on your motorcycle. All it should require is a weekly check with a simple tire pressure gauge. They are inexpensive, easy to use, and may save your life.

Another problem that we frequently encounter is a drive chain that is too loose. It is amazing how few riders actually know how to adjust the chain. It is a simple task with the right tools, which are all available, along with helpful guidance, at the Auto Skills Center. Periodic adjustment and regular lubrication will significantly extend the life of your chain and sprockets.

John Fleming is a rider coach with Cape Fox Professional Services, providing motorcycle safety training for Marines and sailors aboard the Combat Center. To submit your comments or contributions about motorcycling, his email is michael.j.fleming@usmc.mil.

Hot Topics

YOUTH BOWLING CAMP

The Twentynine Palms Park and Recreation Department, partnered with the Bowladium in Twentynine Palms, to offer a week-long bowling camp for children ages 7 through 18 Aug. 10 through 14 from 5 to 6 p.m. Registration will be \$30 and will include a camp T-shirt, instruction and pizza on the last day. Pre-registration is required. For more information, call the recreation department at 367-7562.

HERE'S TO THE HEROES

Anheuser-Busch Adventure Parks is offering a one-time free admission to any of their five parks for all active duty, reserve or National Guard service members until Dec. 31. Limit one per service member per year. For details or to print out an application, visit http://commerce.4adventure.com/store/os_application.asp.

NEW WATER PARK OPENING

Just in time to beat the heat! Kids can enjoy sprinklers and other water spraying machines at the new water park on the corner of Fifth and Bourke streets. The parks open today at 3 p.m. to base personnel and their families. Other new parks in the area are the dinosaur park, the amphitheater and the skate park. These new facilities are designed to improve quality of life aboard the base.

SEXUAL HARASSMENT STUDY SURVEY

Protecting Marines and sailors from sexual assault and supporting those who have already been victimized is a high priority. The Navy and Marine Corps are conducting parallel, service-wide assessments on individual attitudes and experiences along with the insight of related program staffs by conducting an online survey. The key is to gain the best insight into protecting and taking care of our own. The survey will remain open until Sept. 1 at <http://www.manpower.usmc.mil/sas>.

This Day in Marine Corps History

July 30, 1834

Congress placed the Marine Corps under Navy jurisdiction.

Centerspeak

What is the coolest thing you have done while in the Marine Corps?

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



GUNNERY SGT. SHANE BLANTON
2ND BATTALION, 2ND MARINE REGIMENT
COMPANY E

"Spy rigging, hanging out of a helicopter."



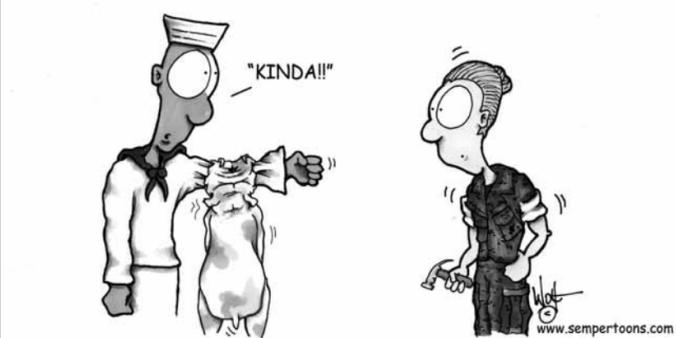
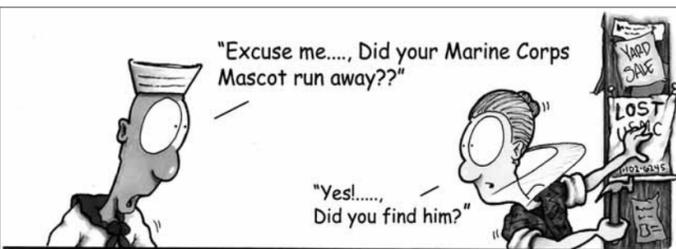
LANCE CPL. BRITTANY GORELIK
HEADQUARTERS BATTALION, COMPANY A

"Shooting the SAW [Squad Automatic Weapon] in MCT [Marine Combat Training]."



SGT. JOSHUA WIRTH
MARINE AIR LOGISTICS SQUADRON,
ORDNANCE

"Promoting and pinning on my junior Marines."



SEMPERTOONS: CREATED BY GUNNERY SGT. CHARLES WOLF, USMCR/RET.

Combat Center Spotlight

Name: Matt Cook
Unit: Range/Training Area Maintenance Section
Hometown: Twentynine Palms, Calif.
Job Title: Heavy equipment operator and dispatcher
Job Description: Responsible for maintaining the training ranges
What do you like most about your job? "Running the equipment - it's fun."
Most significant achievement: "Out of all the training areas, there's only two operators and we maintain them every day. We also run heavy equipment through high impact areas with no injuries."
Hobbies: "Spending time with my family."
Military Service: Four years in the Marine Corps
Time spent at the Combat Center: Two years



OBSERVATION POST

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Deputy Public Affairs Officer 1st Lt. Doy Demisick
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CROSSWORD AND SUDOKU PUZZLES COURTESY OF © 2009 HOMETOWN CONTENT

EXIT TO THE REAR

[puzzle Solutions on A7]

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ACROSS

- Float like a butterfly
- Counter in a debate
- Brother of Cain and Abel
- Hebrides island
- ___ Lodge (motel chain)
- Suffix with hard or soft
- Speckled game fish
- Opposed to, in dialect
- Deeply felt
- eBay user
- HMO staffers
- Like an oboe's sound
- Step after a computer crash
- Give a hard time to
- Polygon calculations
- Some bar mixers
- Picnic throw away
- Autostrada auto
- Mideast's ___ Heights
- Weevil's lunch
- Letterman list count
- They may draw penalties
- Bea Arthur sitcom

DOWN

- Like Oscar Madison
- Was the emcee of
- Apartment figure
- Corp. bigwig
- General Creighton of the Vietnam era
- Enough for two or more
- Time for a work break
- Tornado at sea
- Like a tuned string
- Salt's "Halt!"
- Not deceived by
- Sergeant Snorkel's dog
- Easy mark
- Hammer end
- Stretches the truth
- Traditional learning
- Privy to
- New Mexico tourist town
- Snappy comeback
- Light brown shades
- Responses to bad calls
- 3-time Burmese leader
- Rugrats
- Low tracts of land
- Young man with many merit badges
- Took a stab at
- Oh ___! (candybar)
- "Congratulations!"
- Time line divisions
- Transportation for Huck Finn
- Naval battle site of 1813
- Health food morsel
- Feed bag morsel
- Wreath material
- [Sigh]
- Did a 10K

- Major success
- Shoppe sign word
- Needed a Band-Aid, perhaps
- Org. with an elephant symbol
- ___-relief
- It's filled out
- Alhambra builders
- Crude shelter
- Like a substantial meal
- "Sleep Walk" group ___ & Johnny
- Depth charge target
- Deep Blue's game
- Cashless deal
- Elias Sports Bureau tidbit
- Each, slangily
- Fibula or femur
- Strings for a minstrel
- School attended by James Bond
- Frank Sinatra's wife before Mia

3/7 rushes to perfect fire, manuever tactics

LANCE CPL. M. C. NERL
COMBAT CORRESPONDENT

If you don't move, you die.

The most basic tactical maneuver in warfare is also the most essential. Communication and suppressive fire are what enables movement on the battlefield, giving Marines the upper hand.

These are the tactics Marines from companies I and K, 3rd Battalion, 7th Marine Regiment, put into practice during buddy rush and fire team rush training Tuesday at the Combat Center's ranges 1A and 105A.

The Marines learned the basics of fire and maneuver by remediating rushes. Co. K Marines began by supporting single Marine rushes, whereas Co. I focused on fire teams moving and supporting one another by providing cover fire and communicating on the move.

Co. K is currently at the beginning of the building-block style of training for their next deployment, which is vital to their progression from maneuvering as individuals to an entire battalion, said Staff Sgt. Anthony Czerwinski, a Platoon sergeant with 2nd platoon, Co. K, 3/7.

"It's important to train like this to build our basic skills," Czerwinski, a native of Cleveland, said. "They learn to build on their skills and how to take things to the next level by learning the beginning and moving up to and remediating at the battalion level in [Enhanced] Mojave Viper."

Lance Cpl. Gilbert Andrade, a rifleman with Co. K, and a native of Rancho Cucamonga, Calif., said he knows from experience the training is too important to over-look, even at early stages, because of what it means to them in battle.

"This is what goes into a conventional war," he said. "When we know how to move, shoot and communicate, we can stop anyone, or take out any target."

Andrade said the significance of starting with the individual Marine is what makes



LANCE CPL. M. C. NERL

Pfc. Ronald Sullivan, a rifleman with Company I, 3rd Battalion, 7th Marine Regiment, throws a dummy grenade at a target Tuesday at Combat Center Range 105A when Co. I conducted fire team rushes.

them better as a whole when the company goes to the next level.

"If you can't coordinate, move, shoot and do whatever else is needed between two Marines,

then your company is going to work about as well as a three-legged chair," he said. "For us to progress, we're going to need to get the other [privates first class] and

lance corporals up to speed on what goes on in the fleet. This is not SOI [the school of infantry] anymore. This is the real world."

Co. I was taking a different approach, but they were in a slightly different stage in their progression, said 1st Sgt. Charles Metzger, the company first sergeant, and a native of Kansas City, Kan.

"We started at the ground level, but now we've got Marines working on the next step, which is buddy teams," Metzger said. "We're just doing a traditional build-up exercise to fire and move, and eliminate the enemy."

He said the training is beneficial to the younger Marines who are coming straight from their school house.

"We're working a lot

with our fresh school drops from SOI," he said. "The new guys we have don't know everything or just don't have any experience yet."

Marines who are new to the company and who have not yet deployed recognized they had much to improve before going overseas.

"It's not the learning, it's the coordination and movement that's tough," said Pfc. Ronald Sullivan, a rifleman with Co. I, and a native of Corpus Christi, Texas. "It's hard dealing with the heat, but that's how Iraq and Afghanistan are."

With their training progressing, the battalion will continue to work as the rest of 7th Marines and the Marine Corps continue to prepare themselves for possible deployments in Iraq and Afghanistan.



LANCE CPL. M. C. NERL

Lance Cpl. Christopher Massey, a rifleman with Co. I, 3rd Bn., 7th Marines, sends rounds down range Tuesday at Range 105A.



LANCE CPL. M. C. NERL

Pfc. Christopher Dion Scott, a rifleman with Co. K, 3rd Bn., 7th Marines, from Pine City, Minn., rushes while another Marine lays down covering fire for him Tuesday at Range 1A during the company's training.

WOLFPACK, from A1

get supplies, and we will bring anything they can think of to them."

Chimonas' Marines are a mix of different military occupational specialties ranging from motor transport operators to infantrymen. They each use their unique skill sets to successfully complete their logistics runs.

"I set up communication throughout the logpack," said Pfc. Kyle Darnell, a radio operator with the motor transport section. "I'm just a radio operator, but being out here, I've learned about so many different MOSs."

Darnell is tasked with making sure communication is secure and running at all times while the convoy is on the road. But when he's done loading communication frequencies into the vehicles, he helps out with everything else.

"I help out loading the trucks and changing tires," Darnell said. "Basically anything that the logpack needs help with outside of my MOS, I help complete."

This group effort is what

gets the job done. Chimonas has had to let go of a handful of Marines due to injuries or family emergencies back home. No matter the situation, the rest of his Marines are always standing by, ready to fill any empty seats.

"I like helping out my fellow Marines," Darnell said. "A little bit of help makes everyone's lives easier."

Although everyone helps out where they can, there is one Marine who is solely responsible for making sure everything is loaded properly. He is the loadmaster.

"I make sure everything that is requested from the company's list is put onto the trucks," said Cpl. Giovanni Serna, a loadmaster with the motor transport section.

The usually requested items are water, fuel, food and maintenance parts.

"Certain items can't be mixed together," Serna said. "For example, you can't put hazardous materials and food together."

Serna must observe the loading of the trucks to make sure everything is evenly weighted to avoid tipping, food is separated from poi-

sonous materials and the number of supplies requested matches the amount loaded onto the trucks.

"If we're short on water or anything, that's my responsibility," Serna said.

When the vehicles aren't on convoys moving out to the line companies, they are being checked for maintenance issues so they are fully operational when needed.

"When I'm not on a log run, I'm making sure our vehicles have proper preventative maintenance," said Lance Cpl. Zackery Glasen, the line non-commissioned officer and a turret gunner with the motor transportation section.

The main task of a logpack is supplying the line companies. But they must also protect themselves while on the road, looking for improvised explosive devices or possible ambushes.

Lance Cpl. Wilson Vicenteorellana, a turret gunner and motor transport operator with the motor transportation section, said that he takes his job as a "guardian angel" seriously.

A guardian angel plays an important role in the safety

and security of Marines who are preoccupied with other duties. They provide over-watch, ensuring that others can focus on the task-at-hand, knowing that a fellow Marine is watching over their shoulder, warding off would be attackers.

"It's one of those jobs that makes you feel good about yourself," Vicente said. "You are protecting everyone and you have to watch out for everything."

Chimonas' Marines work together to complete the long logpacks, making sure the

vehicles are ready, supplies are correct, communication channels are open and the convoy is being protected. Their combined efforts ensure supplies are brought out to Marines on the front lines, no matter what the time of day or the distance traveled.



SGT. ERIC C. SCHWARTZ

Marines with motor transport section, Headquarters and Service Company, Task Force 3rd Light Armored Reconnaissance Battalion, Regimental Combat Team 8, offload supplies to prepare them for a logistics movement, or logpack, July 11, at Sahl Sinjar, Iraq. Logpacks are meant to supply companies operating throughout the battalion area of operations who aren't able to supply themselves due to mission requirements.

MARINE CORPS CIVILIAN POLICE

TWENTYNINE PALMS, CA



The Marine Corps Air Ground Combat Center Twentynine Palms is currently hiring civilian police officers. Positions available include Patrol Officer, Military Working Dog Handler, Patrol Supervisor, Field Training Officer, Watch Commander, and many others.

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Veterans, Prior Service, Current Federal and Appointment Eligibles may apply at: <https://chart.donhr.navy.mil>

Punch for punch



LANCE CPL. JEREMIAH HANDELAND

Lance Cpl. Ringo Spurlock (left), a machine gunner from Jump Platoon, Headquarters and Service Company, 2nd Battalion, 7th Marine Regiment, and Cpl. Steven Defeo, a rifleman from Jump Platoon, trade punches at the Combat Center's Del Valle Field July 21. The Marines from Headquarters and Service Co. were training from tan to green belt in the Marine Corps Martial Arts Program alongside Heath Herring, a famous heavyweight Ultimate Fighting Challenge combatant, who came to the Combat Center to teach them mixed martial arts skills.

School Liaison Program at work

JESS NAPOLI
G-5 COMMUNICATIONS SPECIALIST

As another hot summer in Twentynine Palms comes to an end, the school buses are right around the corner and children are not so eagerly waiting the first day of classes. Back to school preparations can be a daunting task, especially for military families who are transitioning in or out of a duty station. In an effort to ease this transition and ultimately enhance the education and welfare of military children, Headquarters Marine Corps implemented the School

Liaison Program. The School Liaison Program facilitates communication between the military family and the local school district, in order to help military families identify and maximize local educational opportunities. Working in conjunction with Family Readiness Officers and Exceptional Family Member programs, school liaisons establish communication between parents, schools, and the Marine Corps. At the Combat Center, the School Liaison Program supports and educates fami-



lies about any educational issue in the local school district involving military children. The relationship between the installation and the school district establishes an understanding of the unique needs of military children, specifically issues related to stress of coping with deployment.

Most military children at the Combat Center receive their education through the Morongo Unified School District, which serves 9,630 students, of which 23 percent are affiliated with the military. Recently, MUSD was awarded \$2 million through an invitational grant from the Department of Defense Education Activities. This grant will benefit all students attending MUSD schools.

How to find the school liaison

Call and make an appointment 830-1574
Visit the school liaison Web site,
http://www.29palms.usmc.mil/visit/school_liaison

Some of the services include:

- PCS support material
- Calendar of base and community events
- College preparation resources
- Homework help
- Information about local schools

RETENTION, from A1

points from a year ago. There are several reasons more Marines want to reenlist, Gayden said. "The economy obviously has a lot to do with Marines

opting for reenlistment," Gayden said. "Every day when you turn on the news there's something bad about the economy." Bonuses, even though they have substantially reduced in amount, are still high priority

factors Marines are considering, he said. Gayden said the new Post 9/11 G.I. Bill, that some said would sway Marines to get out - isn't. "I don't see the new G.I. Bill affecting retention," he said. Marines can use tuition assistance without touching their G.I. benefits, so most of

them will give their benefits to their spouse or children. If anything the new bill will help retention." Lance Cpl. Deanne Brinson, an ammunition technician with the Center Magazine Area, waited to put in her re-enlistment package and has hit problems that may cost her the chance of

staying in the Marine Corps. "My EAS [End of Active Service] was in March," said Brinson, a Thomasville, Ga., native. "After I put in my package I found out it was going to get denied, and since then I've had to keep extending my contract until I get everything I need finished." Gayden said his best advice for Marines planning on reenlisting or are still making up their minds is to act fast. "Like always, don't hesi-

tate in putting together a package," he said. "As a Marine you want to tell Headquarters Marine Corps you want to reenlist. You don't want them telling you you can't." The MOS monitors will be aboard the Combat Center Oct. 19 and 20, to talk with Marines about reenlistment opportunities. For more information call the Career Retention Office at 830-6171.

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Church of God
Worship Service
10:30 A.M. & 6:30 P.M.
Wed. Bible Study 6:30 P.M.
7475 Sunny Vista Rd., Joshua Tree
Pastor Abe Casiano
Church (760) 366-9119

Church of Christ
Sunday Bible Study 9:30 am
Worship 10:30 am 1:30 pm
Ladies' Bible Classes 11am Wed.
Wed. Bible Study 5pm
7021 Airway, Yucca Valley • 365-9215

Yucca Valley Church of Religious Science
Healing Lives & Building Dreams
Reverend Ron Scott
Sunday Celebration & Junior Church 10 AM
7434 Banrock Trail, Yucca Valley
365-2205
yvcrs.org

St. Joseph of Arimathea Episcopal Church
God Loves You As If You Were His Only Child.
Holy Eucharist 10:00 A.M.
Onaga at Church St., Y.V.
365-7133

Good Shepherd Lutheran Church
(Missouri Synod)
WORSHIP SERVICE 9:00 AM
SUNDAY SCHOOL 10:30 AM
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59077 Yucca Trail, Yucca Valley
CHURCH: 365-2548 Preschool & Daycare: 369-9590

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

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Sunday School 9:15 am, Morning Worship 10:30 am.
Evening Service 6:00 pm.
Wednesday Services
Prayer Bible Study 6:30 pm.
Young Married Couples Ministry 6:30 pm.
www.fbc29.org
6414 Split Rock Ave., 29 Palms, CA 760-367-7561

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Worship.....10:45am

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Special Reaction Team clears out Range 111



LANCE CPL. M. C. NERL

Lance Cpl. Jose Cruz, a military policeman with the Combat Center's Provost Marshal's Office's Special Reaction Team, watches the hallway as team members sweep through other rooms at Combat Center Range 111 Wednesday.



LANCE CPL. M. C. NERL

Marines from the Provost Marshal's Office's Special Reaction Team charges into one of many rooms at Combat Center Range 111 Wednesday when they conducted urban warfare training.



LANCE CPL. M. C. NERL

Cpl. Thomas Hammond, a military policeman with the Provost Marshal's Office's Special Reaction Team, watches his comrades' backs Wednesday at Combat Center Range 111 during urban warfare training.

LANCE CPL. M. C. NERL

COMBAT CORRESPONDENT

The Combat Center's Provost Marshal's Office's Special Reaction Team conducted vital close quarter combat skills training to prepare them for military operations in urban terrain at Range 111.

The team used simulation rounds and "flash bang" grenades to clear rooms and neutralize hostile threats, said Cpl. Matt McCaskill, a small arms repairer and technician with the SRT, and a native of Middle Water, Texas.

"We always need to work on our small unit training in a city or suburban environment," he said. "We will always have to utilize this type of training when we get a call to sweep a house or take down a vehicle in a hostage situation."

The team has not cleared real houses recently, however, it

is a valuable asset that cannot be easily forgotten by the team, said Ken Charles, a civilian patrolman with PMO, and a native of Buffalo, N. Y.

"We haven't actually swept a house in a long time," Charles said. "We need to train like this as much as possible so our skills will stay fresh."

The team hopes to gain more experience in urban environments by repeating the training as much as possible, Charles said.

"Right now, it's either quarterly or semi-annually," he said. "If we want to perform at a higher level, we're going to need to train at a higher intensity and more often."

With the team's most recent expedition to one of the Combat Center's many MOUT facilities complete, they will continue to push and train to be ready in the event they get the call to go into action.

The nose knows; PMO K-9s sniff out contraband

LANCE CPL. M. C. NERL

COMBAT CORRESPONDENT

Working dog handlers with the Combat Center's Provost Marshal's Office trained with their canine counterparts Monday, to sniff out hidden explosives and narcotics and take a bite out of crime aboard the base.

The routine training helps dog handlers maintain their skills and helps sharpen the dog's ability to detect the illegal substances, said Cpl. Samuel Corns, a working dog handler with PMO, and a native of Minneapolis.

"We do this all the time," Corns said. "The handlers keep at it constantly, so we can get to the point where we can read the dog like a book."

"Trainers set up scenarios around the base and hid drugs and bombs and tested the dog's ability to sniff them out and the handler's ability to read what their dogs are doing," Corns said.

"So the dog has to sniff it out and they have to read what the dog is doing."

"We train dogs to specifically sniff out narcotics and dogs that sniff out explosives," he said.

Using separate dogs to sniff out different threats is necessary, Corns said.

"If you have a dog searching for both, you don't know if he is detecting a bomb or a pound of marijuana," he said. "Specializing allows trainers to focus the dogs on a specific skill and makes it easier for handlers to know what the dogs have found."

Corns said each of the dogs are also very aggressive and trained as attack dogs, so handling skills were also a big part of the exercises.

"The dogs listen well, but they can get pretty mean," he said. "They can stop people and detain them too with the help of their handler."

Staff Sgt. Joseph Evans, a PMO working dog han-



LANCE CPL. M. C. NERL

Lance Cpl. Drew Nyman, a working dog handler with the Combat Center's Provost Marshal's Office, and a native of Emporia, Kan., works on take-down techniques with Robby, a military working dog with PMO, on Monday.

andler's from Heavener, Okla., said the exercises also help to build a solid relationship between the dogs and handlers.

Evans described more in-depth the importance of a strong relationship between a dog and its handler.

"We keep them in teams as much as possible," he said. "We look for important traits between a Marine and a dog, such as their attitude.

We try to match them up as well as possible so they bond effectively."

"We stress the ability on the handler to read the dog's body language. They obviously cannot communicate verbally, so they do it with how they [the dogs] move and conduct themselves," Evans said. "When the handler can pick up on that, they will be effective at reading the dog at the right time."



LANCE CPL. M. C. NERL

Cpl. Timothy Culhane, a military working dog handler and a Rochester, N.Y., native with the Provost Marshal's Office, inspects incoming role players' luggage Monday with his dog, Jack, at the base's main gate.



LANCE CPL. M. C. NERL

Cpl. Timothy Culhane, a military working dog handler with the Provost Marshal's Office, and a Rochester, N.Y., native, holds back his dog, Jack, Monday during routine training.

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Combat Center tumbles with first MRAP trainer in U.S.

CPL. NICOLE A. LAVINE
COMBAT CORRESPONDENT

Marines with Marine Wing Support Squadron 374 were the first to train with a new vehicle simulation trainer at Camp Wilson Wednesday to better prepare them for a Mine Resistant Ambush Protected Vehicle rollover.

The MRAP Vehicle Egress Trainer, or MET, is located at the Battle Simulation Center at Camp Wilson and is currently the first active MET simulator in the United States, said Staff Sgt. Frank Villaverde, a combat tactics instructor at the Battle Simulation Center.

"It's designed to familiarize Marines with being turned around and how to egress the vehicle safely," said Villaverde, a Superior, Ariz., native. "It's very disorienting when you're upside down in a vehicle, and you get better at getting out safely the more you train."

Villaverde said this training is proactive in nature, keeping in mind MRAP vehicles in their many variations are typically top-heavy.

Aside from small variants in design, the MET is similar

to its cousin, the Humvee Egress Assistance Trainer, or HEAT.

Nearly half of the Marines with MWSS-374 who trained with the MET Wednesday have also trained with the HEAT.

Lance Cpl. Steve Hodges, a motor transportation operator with Support Company, MWSS-374, said although he was familiar with the idea behind the training, it still taught him a valuable lesson.

"This one spun slower, but the seatbelts were a lot harder to manipulate," said the Warren, Mich., native.

The seatbelts standard to the MRAP consist of dual shoulder straps with buckles and a lap belt with a buckle, which differs from the standard lap belt of a humvee.

Both simulators demand the physical and mental fortitude of the service members by requiring them to break free of seatbelts and other obstacles, maintain communication, get all passengers out safely, and emerge from the vehicle without compromising security, Villaverde said.

After Marines have been



CPL. NICOLE A. LAVINE

Lance Cpl. Ryan Romero, a motor transportation operator with Marine Wing Support Squadron 374, hops down from the gunner's hatch after participating in the Combat Center's newest rollover training simulator, the Mine Resistant Ambush Protected Egress Trainer, at the Battle Simulation Center at Camp Wilson Wednesday.

secured in the simulator wearing full gear, seatbelts and unloaded M16A2 service rifles, the simulator spins like

a rotisserie, tossing up sand and dust inside, and disorienting its crew.

The simulator then stops at one of three points; on either of its sides, or on its roof. The crew must then release their seatbelts while supporting their body weight, help fellow service members from their seats if needed, and egress the vehicle at the opening closest to them.

Staff Sgt. Jesus Rivera, the operations chief for Support Company, MWSS-374, was qualified as a MET operator the morning of the unit's training.

"We went through the MET sitting in most of the seats, went through all the scenarios and studied the entire system," Rivera said. "This is the same concept as the HEAT, but I think the biggest difference is how the

Marines have to sit facing each other. It has a much more realistic feel."

Pfc. Dylan J. Williams, a motor transportation operator from Support Company, MWSS-374, had not experienced rollover training before and said the training may serve as priceless knowledge in the face of a rollover in theater.

"If there was a rollover in combat, I wouldn't have known how to get out," said Williams, a Eugene, Ore., native. "There was a lot of sand inside and it was really uncomfortable. This really was good training."

The MET training is un delegated and requires unit operators to be at least the rank of sergeant. To learn more about operator qualifications or to book training call 830-4192.



CPL. NICOLE A. LAVINE

Cpl. Dennis A. Dunn, a motor transportation operator with MWSS-374, emerges from the driver's door of the Mine Resistant Ambush Protected Egress Trainer.



CPL. NICOLE A. LAVINE

Marines with Marine Wing Support Squadron 374 brace themselves as the Mine Resistant Ambush Protected Egress Trainer, the Combat Center's newest rollover training simulator, begins to spin at the Battle Simulation Center at Camp Wilson Wednesday.



TOUGH MINDED OPTIMISM

by Lou Gerhardt

Friday, July 17, 2009 I experienced some unforgettable moments. Around two o'clock in the morning I awakened from a fascinating dream in which Walter Cronkite and I discussed several topics. After I awakened I continued thinking about Cronkite because, in fact, I hadn't consciously thought about him in months, maybe years.

When my wife Patty and I got up to begin an extremely busy day we didn't turn on the radio or television sets, or even check emails. The fact is that I didn't consciously know that Cronkite had died until after 5 o'clock in the evening!

Astronaut Buzz Aldrin commented the other day that he has experienced three worlds: the physical, the spiritual, and, transcending them all and encompassing them all, the real world.

In 1941 at the age of 16 I wrote the following words for a national magazine. "While walking through the silent woods or gazing out over the calm lagoon, I saw the beauty of our world and felt that I was communing with God."

In 1972 I stood alone on the Mount of Olives in Israel and had another indelible experience as I felt a living presence and the overwhelming sense of belonging to that which is eternal.

My words are so inadequate, but from the very core of my being I testify that my experiences were real.

The words from Broadway's much loved musical "South Pacific" come to mind: "What can explain it? Who can tell you why? Fools give you reasons. Wise men never try."

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Mercy Air keeps watch from above

LANCE CPL. MONICA C. ERICKSON

COMBAT CORRESPONDENT

A Marine is conducting training operations with his battalion in the Combat Center's Lavic Lake training area. Something goes horribly wrong and he is caught in an explosion. He now has what is known as the crucial 'golden hour' to receive medical attention before he loses a limb, or worse: his life.

If an ambulance was dispatched from Mainside to collect the injured Marine it could take up to an hour-and-a-half to drive there, said Jim Langley, a Mercy Air flight paramedic. Even more time would be lost stabilizing him, loading him up and travelling back to Mainside, then on to a trauma center.

Mercy Air can fly anywhere on base and to a trauma center within that crucial hour. They respond to a wide range of

injuries and illnesses including training and vehicle accidents, firearm misfires, blast injuries, heat casualties and bee stings.

"I remember the first emergency flight Mercy Air was called out on," said Langley, a Huntington Beach, Calif., native. "It was right behind our trailer. A 19-year-old Marine went into cardiac arrest and stopped breathing during [physical training]."

"Short of cracking a chest open and massaging the heart, we can keep a person's heart beating until we arrive to the nearest trauma center."

When an emergency is called in and a casualty evacuation is required, the pilot, flight nurse and flight medic have 30 minutes to take off from the landing pad.

"Our crew is in the air faster than the required time limit," said Scott Larson, the Range Management Control Division operations officer. "They aver-

age 15 minutes, but I have seen them in the air as fast as six minutes."

Mercy Air doesn't just evacuate casualties and trauma patients. When needed, the crew members will work with the Provost Marshal's Office Special Reaction Team to help stop scappers who illegally enter the Combat Center's training areas looking for scrap metal to sell.

Mercy Air flies the SRT crew to ranges where scappers are reported and also provide medical support to the scappers if they have been injured.

"These scappers are endangering themselves," said Bill Stuehler, a registered nurse with the Combat Center's Mercy Air. "They are going into 'hot ranges' all the time, and then they endanger the lives of Marines and Mercy Air crew members when we have to go in and get them."

Stuehler continued by say-

ing many scappers have died from exposure to the elements and from taking unexploded ordnance with them.

Taking on a third billet, the Mercy Air crew also teaches corpsman how to call in a casualty evacuation.

"We participate in 'cherry pickers' [mock medical evacuations] with units going through Mojave Viper," Langley said. "The unit will set up a fake IED [improvised explosive device] and have a large number of people be injured in the blast. It is up to the corpsman to call it in to us, prep a landing zone and decide who will be medivaced out since we can only carry eight passengers and two litters."

Mercy Air has been at the Combat Center since 2005, and will continue to fly throughout the ranges, helping to transport Marines, sailors and civilian employees within the golden hour when an emergency hits.

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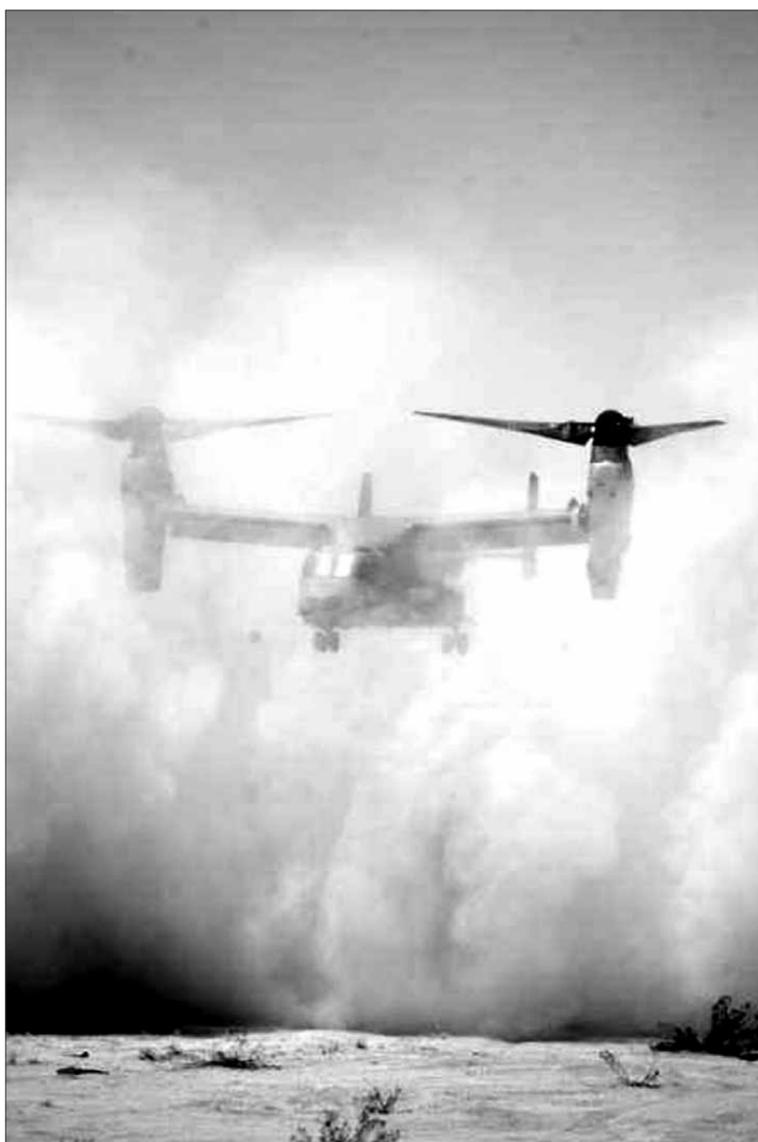
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LANCE CPL. MONICA C. ERICKSON

Paul Vance, a pilot for the Combat Center's air ambulance, known as Mercy Air, takes off toward Mainside after getting fuel at the Expeditionary Airfield Tuesday.

Kickin' up some dust



LANCE CPL. JEREMIAH HANDELAND

An MV-22 Osprey prepares to land during a Clear Hold Build Exercise at the Combat Center's Quackenbush training area July 20.



BIRTH ANNOUNCEMENTS



KILLIAN ASHER STRICKLAND

Son of Cpl. Andrew and Cpl. Kimberly Strickland
Born June 10, weighing 8 lbs. 3 oz. and measuring 20 inches

MATTHEW GABRIEL FRIAS

Son of Sgt. Marcos G. Frias and Mayira Frias
Born June 11, weighing 7 lbs. 11 oz. and measuring 20 inches

NAYTHAN CHRISTOPHER MICALE

Son of Lance Cpl. Michael Micale and Samantha Seaton
Born June 12, weighing 6 lbs. 13 oz. and measuring 20.2 inches

NYVEAH ARRIAH HAYDEN

Daughter of Cpl. Antonio Hayden and Taissa Hayden
Born June 12, weighing 5 lbs. 8 oz. and measuring 17 inches

COLBY LEE HILLER

Son of Cpl. Lawrence E. Hiller and Katy Hiller
Born June 13, weighing 6 lbs. 15 oz. and measuring 19.3 inches

AUSTIN JEFFERY KELSO

Son of Lance Cpl. Sean Kelso and Bethani Kelso
Born June 14, weighing 6 lbs. 9 oz. and measuring 19.4 inches

JESSICA ELIZABETH CAMARA

Daughter of Staff Sgt. John A. Camara and Jennifer Camara
Born June 15, weighing 7 lbs. 1.8 oz. and measuring 18.6 inches

JAYDEN RENEE BRIDGES

Daughter of Lance Cpl. Nicholas Bridges and Kaitlynn Bridges
Born June 18, weighing 5 lbs. 9 oz. and measuring 18 inches

LYDIA MONET LEDBETTER

Daughter of Cpl. Tyler Ledbetter and Lindsey Ledbetter
Born June 18, weighing 6 lbs. 13 oz. and measuring 19.9 inches

JAMES PATRICK SANGER

Son of Cpl. Jesse Sanger and Jessica Sanger
Born June 18, weighing 8 lbs. 7 oz. and measuring 20.9 inches

KAITLYN JEANNE MCGRATH

Daughter of 1st Lt. Michael McGrath and Jessica McGrath
Born June 18, weighing 6 lbs. 15 oz. and measuring 19.8 inches

EASTON WILLIAM LITTLE

Son of Cpl. Chris Little and Sarah Little
Born June 20, weighing 7 lbs. 8 oz. and measuring 20.9 inches

KADYNCE SUZANA DRUMMOND

Daughter of Staff Sgt. Todd S. Drummond and Tara Drummond
Born June 22, weighing 7 lbs. 10.2 oz. and measuring 19.4 inches

CONNOR ANDREW BULLARD

Son of Lance Cpl. Devin A. Bullard and Ashley Bullard
Born June 23, weighing 6 lbs. 10 oz. and measuring 18.9 inches

TROY ANDRES PALACIOS

Son of Pvt. Victor M. Palacios and Madalyn Palacios
Born June 23, weighing 7 lbs. 3 oz. and measuring 19.2 inches

NATHANIEL STEVEN GERHART

Son of Sgt. Nathaniel Gerhart and Britany Gerhart
Born June 23, weighing 6 lbs. 9 oz. and measuring 19.7 inches

RAYNE NICHOLE OWENS

Daughter of Lance Cpl. Cody Owens and Sarah Owens
Born June 24, weighing 8 lbs. 5 oz. and measuring 19.5 inches

MADISON LEXI GRISWOLD

Daughter of Lance Cpl. Brian Griswold and Donna Griswold
Born June 24, weighing 6 lbs. 8 oz. and measuring 20 inches

MACKENZIE DIOR GRISWOLD

Daughter of Lance Cpl. Brian Griswold and Donna Griswold
Born June 24, weighing 6 lbs. 8 oz. and measuring 20 inches

SEARRA ANN DAVES

Daughter of Cpl. Troy Daves and Genna Daves
Born June 10, weighing 7 lbs. 2 oz. and measuring 20 inches

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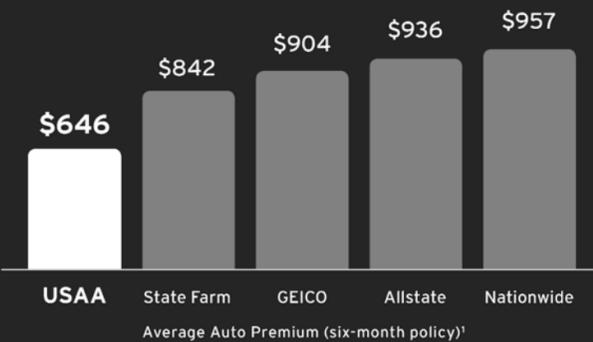
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approved by Base Housing. This ensures the Combat Center Trader is not used for commercial real estate endeavors.

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Lance Cpl. Anthony Young, an airframes mechanic with the Range/Training Area Maintenance Section, helps rebuild a bunker Tuesday after it burned down during training at Combat Center Range 410A. RTAMS relies on Marines of different skills and military occupational specialties to keep ranges up and running for training units.



CPL. NICOLE A. LAVINE

RTAMS, from A1

"We replace an average of 60 Hescos every quarter in impact areas. On top of that, every couple weeks, we go out to the live-fire ranges to replace or repair the Hescos and targets there."

RTAMS' area of operation includes Noble Pass, Quackenbush, Lavic Lake, Lead Mountain, Rainbow Canyon, Maumee Mine, Gay's Pass, Cleghorn Pass, and other training areas.

Due to the high volume and demand for labor, every individual in RTAMS visits the ranges to share the work load, said Robert Moreno, the RTAMS supply technician.

The RTAMS Marines and civilians often work 50 hours a week.

"Our job requires heavy equipment operators, light to moderate construction, road repairs and setting up obstacles like concertina wire for the Marines training," said Moreno, a San Antonio native and retired gunnery sergeant. "There are limited funds and resources, but we get the mission done."

If repairing and maintaining ranges wasn't enough to keep RTAMS busy, Mother Nature is always happy to add more tasks to their plate.

"Rain storms cause the most damage to roads here," Moreno said. "We come out, mark off the dangerous areas with infrared signs and reflective tape, and our three HE [heavy equipment] operators rebuild the barriers. Then the roads are good - until the next storm hits."

Sometimes the damage requires heavy equipment not readily accessible to the team, so they must lease it from private industries, said Carrington.

Since RTAMS exists to support training, they do not interrupt exercises to make minor repairs or replacements. The RTAMS team must be well organized and ready to slip into ranges when the training schedule allows to get the job done.

"Hopefully, we'll get a week or a week-and-a-half to repair the live-fire ranges between units coming in for [Enhanced] Mojave Viper," Carrington said. "If we don't get that chance because of white space training [tentative unit training], then we'll just follow behind the units and fix things as we go."

Many of the Marines who take care of those repairs have either been sent to RTAMS from uniting

training in Mojave Viper, or they have been added as permanent personnel from other Combat Center units. In either case, Marines take valuable skills away when they change units or get out of the Marine Corps, Carrington said.

When a hand grenade bunker burned down at Combat Center Range 410A earlier this month, RTAMS waited for the training unit to finish its evolution before closing the range to bring in supplies to replace the bunker.

Lance Cpl. Anthony Young, an airframe mechanic originally with Marine Aviation Logistics Squadron 11, 3rd Marine Air Wing, helped rebuild the structure and said there are two reasons he draws satisfaction from his job.

"This job lets you learn something new and trains you in stuff outside of your MOS [military occupational specialty]," he said. "It also feels good being involved with keeping the ranges up. There's a lot of work that needs to get done, and by the end of the day, I'm usually pretty wiped out."

Other Marines who have trained on some of these ranges said they understand the importance of keeping them up and running.

"Marines wouldn't be able to come out here and train if we weren't around," said Lance Cpl. Brett Myers, a rifleman sent from Company I, 3rd Battalion, 7th Marine Regiment. "You don't want the Marines running on broken ranges."

Lance Cpl. Erving Wright, a maintenance administration clerk with Marine Aviations Logistics Squadron 13, out of Marine Corps Air Station Yuma, Ariz., agreed.

"It feels good helping other Marines get ready for their deployments or Iraq or wherever they may go," said the Charleston, S.C., native.

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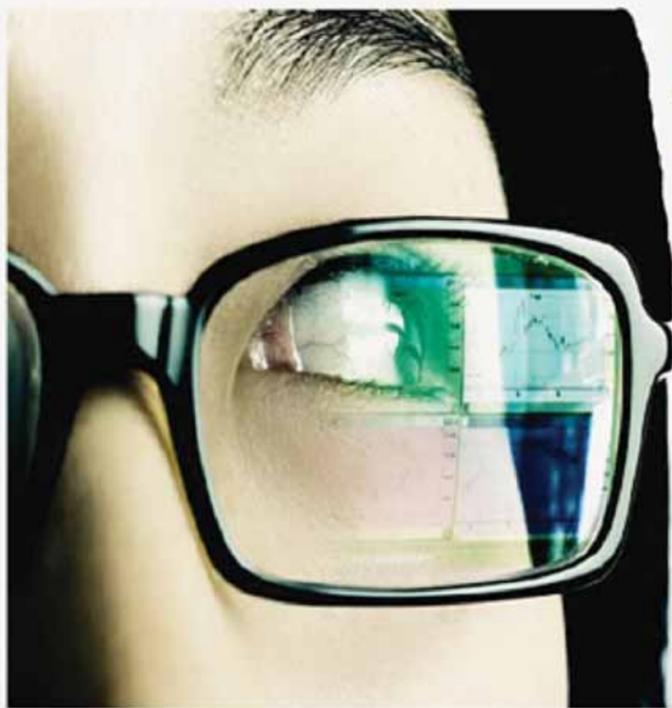
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CPL. NICOLE A. LAVINE

Mark Carrington, the Range/Training Area Maintenance Section officer in charge, rebuilds a road barrier heading to Range 410A that was washed out by a recent rain storm.



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B1

Affliction MMA fighters spend day with Marines, sailors, families

CPL. NICOLE A. LAVINE

COMBAT CORRESPONDENT

Professional fighters from Affliction, a major mixed martial arts organization and clothing line, visited the Combat Center Sunday to mingle with base personnel.

Big-league MMA names such as Bas Rutten, Tim Sylvia, Hermes Franca and Albert Rios met with hundreds of Combat Center service members and their families at the Marine Corps Exchange to sign autographs and take photos with the base community.

"I think it's really awesome these guys came out here," said Lance Cpl. K.C. Shailer, an automotive organizational mechanic with Combat Logistics Battalion 46, from Marine Corps Base Camp Lejeune, N.C., and native of Morris, Conn. "They have a really busy schedule and they could be anywhere else, but they're here. I think that's really great."

Tom Atencio, the vice president of Affliction Clothing and an Affliction MMA partner, said the trip to the Combat Center had been planned for some time. Atencio, whose uncle served in the Corps during the Vietnam War, said showing support to service members is something he and the fighters felt proud doing.

"We want to give back to the people who make sacrifices for our country," said Atencio, a Laguna Beach, Calif., native. "I can't say in words how much we appreciate what Marines [and sailors] do here."

While aboard the Combat Center, the MMA fighters split into two groups, one staying at the main exchange; the other



CPL. NICOLE A. LAVINE

Several Affliction fighters pose with Lance Cpl. Stephen Ducey, a motor vehicle operator with Transportation and Support Company, Combat Logistics Battalion 46, after Ducey won an Affliction T-shirt in a raffle at the Camp Wilson Exchange Sunday.

See FIGHTERS, B4

Retreat Center offers place for relaxation, peace

LANCE CPL. MONICA C. ERICKSON

COMBAT CORRESPONDENT

JOSHUA TREE, Calif. – The Joshua Tree Retreat, Conference and Wellness Resort can provide an inexpensive little getaway weekend that might be the relaxation some Marines need to recharge, reset or just be alone.

The local retreat center founded in 1941 by Edwin J. Dingle, provides a wide variety of events, classes and 420 acres of hiking paths for community members wishing to delve deeper into meditation, relaxation and peace.

The area is visited by many religious groups for its perceived spiritual power and natural beauty said Rebecca Bueller, an attendant with the retreat center. But everybody, including Marines and their families, are welcome to come and enjoy the pristine desert land, even if they don't feel compelled to interact with any of the groups visiting the center.

Guest can get closer to nature by visiting the rock-made labyrinth, a rock formation in the shape of a medicine wheel, or the amphitheater and trails that lead to open desert vistas. They can provide a perfect desert escape free of charge, said Bueller, a Joshua Tree, resident.

Bueller asks for visitors to check in with the front desk before walking the grounds.

"Sometimes we get people whose meditation style is staying silent throughout their entire stay here," she said. "It is polite to respect their wishes and help them keep that vow of silence. That's why we ask people to check in before walking around so we can inform them if any groups like that are using the facility."

People wishing to spend a weekend on the grounds have four different types of accommodation options to choose from according to the retreat center's Web site,

See RESORT, B4



LANCE CPL. MONICA C. ERICKSON

The center of the labyrinth at the Joshua Tree Retreat, Conference and Wellness Resort, is surrounded by random objects left behind by people as an offering of peace. The retreat center is used to host a multitude of classes and activities.



CPL. R. LOGAN KYLE

Gunnery Sgt. Cheryl J. Hyde, the administration chief for the commanding general's office, and her daughter, Jasmine, received a letter of recognition from Mayor Joel Klink during a City Hall meeting Tuesday. Jasmine placed in Time Warner Cable's Desert Cities' 25 Best Moms of 2009 Essay Contest out of nearly 1,300 entries from children in grades four to 12.

MCAGCC moms named best among Desert Cities

CPL. R. LOGAN KYLE

COMBAT CORRESPONDENT

TWENTYNINE PALMS Calif., – A Marine and a military spouse were recognized during a Twentynine Palms City Hall meeting Tuesday for being named in Time Warner Cable's Desert Cities' 25 Best Moms of 2009 Essay Contest after their children submitted their entries in March.

Gunnery Sgt. Cheryl J. Hyde, the administration chief for the commanding general's office, and her daughter, Jasmine, received a certificate and letter opener from Mayor Joel Klink during the meeting. Christina Downey, the

wife of Master Gunnery Sgt. Donald T. Downey, the director of the Marine Corps Staff Noncommissioned Officer Academy Sergeants Course, and her daughter Abigail Moorman were also recognized during the meeting, but were unable to attend.

Both daughters' essays were selected out of nearly 1,300 other entries from children in grades four to 12.

"It felt really great to get the award," Jasmine said. "I think we got it because I wrote a really great story about my mom and how great she is."

Hyde said she was glad to see community leaders recognize the accomplish-

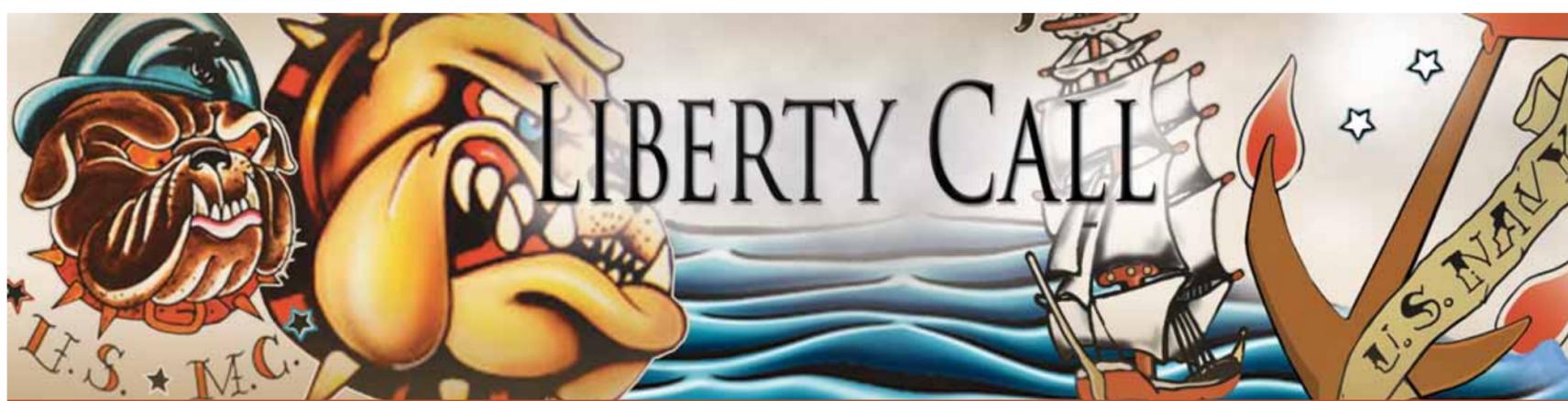
ments of service members and their families.

"I was really honored to be recognized by the city," Hyde said. "These people are here to talk about business, and for them to recognize us during the meeting was very special."

Hyde also said she was proud of her daughter's hard work.

"Jasmine wrote her essay on top of accomplishing her other school projects and, believe me, we had our hands full at that time," she said. "I'm glad I've had enough of an impact on her to make her want to tell other people

See MOM, B3



FRI. 7/31 Mel Brooks' "The Producers" Time: 7 p.m. Where: Theatre 29 73637 Sullivan Road Twentynine Palms For more info call 361-4151 or http://www.theatre29.com	FRI. 7/31 Concert: Troy Michael and Iron Hawk Time: 8 p.m. Where: Rattlesnake Jakes 51572 Twentynine Palms Highway, Morongo Valley. For more info call 363-6513 or visit http://www.rattlesnakejakes.net	SUN. 8/2 The Thriftstore All Stars Time: 7 pm. Where: Pappy & Harriet's 53688 Pioneertown Road Pioneertown For more info call 365-5956 or visit http://www.pappyandharriets.com	TUES. 8/4 Super Ruby Tuesdays Open Mic Night Time: 8 p.m. Where: Joshua Tree Saloon 61835 29 Palms Highway Joshua Tree For more info call 366-2250 or visit http://www.thejoshuatree.com	FRI. 8/7 'The Gathering' healing network Time: 6:30 p.m. Where: Joshua Tree Retreat and Event Center 59700 29 Palms Highway Joshua Tree For more info call 365-8371 or visit http://www.jtrcc.org
SAT. 8/8 Joshua Tree Certified Farmers Market Time: 8 a.m. to 12 p.m. Where: Downtown Joshua Tree South side of Twentynine Palms Highway, just west of Park Boulevard, Joshua Tree. For more info call 363-1934	SAT. 8/8 Rock Yard tribute bands Time: 9 p.m. Where: Fantasy Springs Resort Casino 84245 Indio Springs Parkway Indio. For more info call 342-5000 or visit http://www.fantasyspringsresort.com	SUN. 8/9 The Golden Boys Time: 7 p.m. Where: Morongo Casino Resort and Spa 49500 Seminole Drive Cabazon. For more info call (800) 252-4499 or visit http://www.morongocasinoresort.com	SUN. 8/9 Chris Walters acoustic old school blues with special guests Time: 7 p.m. Where: 29 Palms Inn 73950 Inn Avenue Twentynine Palms For more info call 367-3505 or visit http://www.29palmsinn.com	FRI. 9/4 The Pretenders Time: 9 p.m. Where: Agua Caliente 32-250 Bob Hope Drive Rancho Mirage For more info call (888) 999-1995 or visit http://hotwatercasino.com

'Hangover' a merry misadventure for grownups

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The Hangover

Rated R

Four buddies head to Las Vegas for a bachelor party night to remember. But it becomes a night of such debauchery that they can't remember ANY of it – including how they ended up with a tiger in the bathroom, a baby in the closet and no trace of the groom.

As the party boys scramble to retrace their night-before steps and make some sense of the morning-after shambles, their misadventures only multiply. They get arrested for

stealing a police cruiser. They're attacked by a naked Asian man with a crowbar and tasered by a classroom of school kids. They end up in Mike Tyson's mansion, watching TV on the couch with the former heavyweight champ.

Humor has always been somewhat subjective. What makes me crack up might not make you even crack a smile. "The Hangover" is a good litmus test to determine your taste in funny.

You may, or may not, laugh as the trio of grooms-men deal with the various madcap aftershocks of one night that must have been a real doozy. Just how much of a doozy? For that, you have

to wait for the end credits, when photos from a digital camera reveal – to the audience as well as the characters – just what happened.

If the movie's gleeful rush into areas of questionable comedic taste occasionally raises an eyebrow here and there, the end sequence will seal them right off, using up any unused juice in the already well-earned R rating. If you're bringing your grandma, make sure you're headed to the exit the moment the grooms-men find that camera. You've only got about a minute, so get moving.

The lead characters are a modern-day trio of Three Stooges, with ringleader Phil, played by Bradley Cooper, in the Moe pole position. Sensible Stu (Ed Helms) bears sundry comic indignities, like losing a tooth, a la Larry, holding the comic middle ground between alpha-dog Phil and the dangerously dimwitted Alan (Zack Galifianakis), a surrogate Curly.

But the Stooges were kid stuff, and this is strictly for



COURTESY PHOTO

A Las Vegas bachelor party becomes a night of such debauchery where misadventures continue to multiply in a morning-after mess in which they get arrested for stealing a police cruiser are attacked by a naked Asian man and tasered by a classroom full of children.

grownups – grownups who aren't easily offended by watching depictions of sundry grownup misbehaviors, and who enjoy seeing just how far a movie can push the envelope.

I heard a lot of people laughing, hard, at the screening I attended – and saw no one getting up to leave. It all

hinges on how your comedy radar is tilted. Or twisted.

Let's face it, you probably aren't going to stumble into a movie like this, or almost any movie, by accident. Most people who see it are going to have a pretty good idea of what they're getting into. And once there, they're going to laugh.

For everyone else, if this review makes it sound like "The Hangover" is something you probably wouldn't like, take it to heart. There's always another option – something kinder, something gentler, something more likely to fit snugly inside your cinema comfort zone – just down the multiplex hall.

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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 WallMart	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 WallMart	MCAGCC			
12:00	12:10	12:15	12:50	1:35			
*6:00	*6:10	*6:15	*6:50	*7:35			

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Vietnam book, 'Ride The Thunder' reviewed by Vietnam veteran

RETIRED REAR ADM. JEREMIAH DENTON

Ride the Thunder

By Richard Botkin

Thirty six years ago this month, after the North Vietnamese suffered utter

destruction of their military complex from Linebacker II air operations and the blockade of all North Vietnam ports, the Democratic Congress passed a bill prohibiting any further U.S. aid to South Vietnam. The bill's passage was the death sentence to

the nation we had vowed to protect from communism.

President Nixon knew his veto of the bill would be overridden, making any veto effort futile. Even though the North was ready to sign a treaty to free South Vietnam, Congress' demands to pass the bill nullified Linebacker II and provided the communists with a free ticket to walk into South Vietnam.

resulted in the tragic realization among veterans and citizenry alike that the gallant, sacrificial effort of American, South Vietnamese and allied forces to preserve a free South Vietnam had been futile and flagrantly unappreciated by America. Following Vietnam, no American promise of prolonged commitment to any cause would be of concern to antagonists or trusted by allies.

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This exercise of off-battlefield politics resulted not only in the loss of a near conquest by American armed forces but in a dreadful loss of American credibility. No history pundit has since given account to Vietnam's true victory – until now. Richard Botkin, author of "Ride the Thunder," provides indispensable, historic details of the Vietnam War, dispelling the notion that all was lost.

The precedent is being applied tragically by the current administration in its signals to our antagonists that we will withdraw our troops from Iraq and other Middle East trouble spots before we achieve our objectives. Unless we can dismiss the applicability of the precedent, we are destined to repeat our failures, thus ensuring our ultimate demise as a nation. However,

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All-Marine Women's Softball Team scouts Twentynine Palms Marines

LANCE CPL. MONICA C. ERICKSON

COMBAT CORRESPONDENT

A loud crack echoed through the air as a softball soared down the field while

the coach for the All-Marine Women's Softball Team whistled with respect at the power of the hit during the team's screening at the Combat Center's Felix Field Wednesday.

The assessment was set up by Daniel Sullivan, the coach for the All-Marine team, and his wife, Debra, an administrative assistant for Marine Corps Community Services Semper Fit Division, to give active duty and reserve female Marines a chance to try out for the All-Marine Trial Camp in Marine Corps Air Station Cherry Point, N.C., from Aug. 28 through Sept. 24.

During the screening, the players were evaluated on their hitting and fielding skills, and their knowledge of the sport, said Debra Sullivan, a Clifton, Ariz., native.

"This is getting their foot in the door," said Daniel, a retired master gunnery sergeant, and Columbus, Ohio native. "It doesn't mean they will make the All-Marine team."

Lance Cpl. Katherine



LANCE CPL. MONICA C. ERICKSON

Lance Cpl. Katherine Smith, an administrative clerk at the Installation Personnel Administration Center, who played with the All-Marine Women's Softball Team in 2007, keeps her eye on the ball in preparation to smash it to the outfield during the All-Marine Women's Softball Team screening Wednesday at Felix Field.

Smith, an administrative clerk at the Installation Personnel Administration Center, who

played with the All-Marine Women's Softball Team in 2007, said she did well during the screening but felt her hitting needed to improve.

"Coach told me to bite my shirt when I am hitting," said the Modesto, Calif., native. "When I tried it I felt why I was hitting pop-fly balls - I was leaning back and dropping my shoulder and the shirt ripped out of my teeth."

The players who showed enough skill Wednesday will be given a resume to fill out, and will be allowed to go to the All-Marine Trial Camp. Female Marines from throughout the Marine Corps

will attend the camp and the least skilled players will be weeded out until only 15 of the best remain.

"These girls can do the math," Daniel Sullivan said. "They know only 15 players will make the team, so they know they have to step up their game and play their best."

After the camp, the Marines chosen to play on the All-Marine team will participate in an Armed Forces tournament in Pensacola, Fla., where they will compete against the Navy, Army and Air Force.



LANCE CPL. MONICA C. ERICKSON

Capt. Ruth Wilson, the data training section officer in charge of the Marine Corps Communications-Electronics School, makes a direct hit during the All-Marine Women's Softball Team screening Wednesday at Felix Field.



LANCE CPL. MONICA C. ERICKSON

Lance Cpl. Katherine Smith, an administrative clerk at the Installation Personnel Administration Center, who played with the All-Marine Women's Softball Team in 2007, dives and grabs a ground ball while being screened Wednesday at Felix Field.

Athlete of the Week



Name: Richard Ericson

Age: 28

Hometown: Miami

Job Title: Special Security Officer

Recognition: Bowled high season average and was on the championship bowling team for the Commanding General's Intramural League.

Major sports accomplishments: Has bowled two 300s in the same year.

Favorite aspect of the sport: "The competitiveness and camaraderie. It's one of those sports where you fuel off of your own team and play at the level of competition."

Advise for aspiring players: "Practice as much as you can. Join a league and get coaching like any other sport."

MOM, from B1

about me."

In Moorman's essay, she said she can talk to her mom about anything, and she is always there for her.

"When my dad was in Iraq and she was at home with all four of us children, she made sure she gave us the love and support we needed," the essay read. "There are times

when we don't get along, but we still have fun together, spend time together, talk to each other and help each other."

Military life will continue to put a lot of responsibility on Hyde, Downey and other military moms, but it is their skill of balancing work and spending time with their children that continue to make them unique.

THUNDER, from B2

we will not dismiss it until the truth about our Vietnam experience is revealed in its totality.

Now at last, "Ride the Thunder" provides this indispensable revelation. Anyone who reads it will finally have the facts to perceive the answers to long-held questions: Was the cause in Vietnam worth our waging a war? Did the media's reporting and false antiwar influences cause us to surrender? Was military victory indeed forfeited by Congress' unilateral political act? Was the bill prohibiting any further commitment to the coup de grace in an effort to free South Vietnam?

The book delivers the truth comprehensively and authoritatively. Evidence is presented in the true stories of persons engaged over the entire time frame of the war. Incontrovertible facts and details are presented on Vietnam.

"Ride the Thunder" painstakingly sketches the history of Vietnam, revealing its remarkable ethnic characteristics: its peerless work ethic, an unequal awareness of the importance of family, compassion for the elderly and an awareness of the importance of rearing wholesome children. It relates how Vietnam in early ages became a powerful nation in military, political and economic terms.

However, Mr. Botkin also relates Vietnam's history of often being overtaken and ruled by more powerful nations whose soldiers and officials mistreated innocent Vietnamese with unbelievable savagery. From China, Japan and other powerful oppressors to devastating natural disasters, Vietnam's people have been tempered by sufferings for centuries.

"Ride the Thunder" traces its historical origins in relationship with the United States. The book exemplifies how the

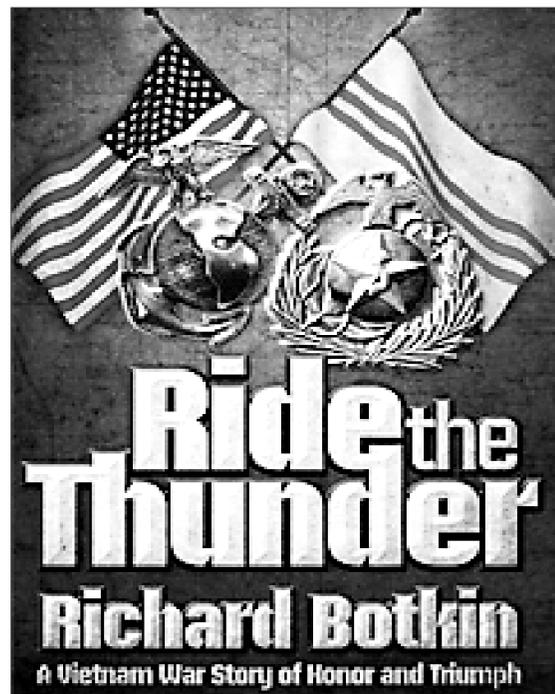
Korean War predisposed the United States to regard Ho Chi Minh's invasion as directly related to U.S. containment of communist expansion. The Korean War ended with the United States settling on a stalemate for the first time in our history. This created a pattern of quitting and foretold the possibility we would settle for even less in a future war - as we did in Vietnam and show signs of doing in the Middle East.

Naturally, Vietnam's history takes the sharpest focus as it deals with the American involvement in the Vietnam War. In this light, "Ride the Thunder" chronicles the individual personal experiences of the Vietnamese and U.S. military and political personages, the sum of which presents a comprehensive tapestry depicting all the complex facets, revelations and implications of the war and its aftermath.

The persons chronicled have well-known names, including Maj. Le Ba Binh, U.S. Marine Lt. Col. Gerry Turley, Capt. John Ripley and Sgt. Chuck Goggin, to name a few. The sum of their collective experiences displays the events and true significance of every ground and air campaign, battle and strategic tactical decision. The truth derived is in sharp contrast to the way the war was reported, written into history and remembered by us as a nation.

As I reviewed "Ride the Thunder," though I have come to be regarded as one of the more authentic writers on what is significant about that war, I learned much I had not known.

However, more than any author can convey in words, one thing that I and other former prisoners of war witnessed with our own eyes was the absolute total destruction of the enemy's military during Linebacker II and the full realization by the North Vietnamese that they no



longer had the means to continue the war.

A few days before my release from prison, I was subjected to an interview and briefing by the top military and political leadership of North Vietnam. The leaders told me they accepted defeat and were eager to sign an agreement to keep South Vietnam free. Their earnest plea to me upon return was to prevent the POWs from exaggerating the brutality of the treatment inflicted on us, which would incite U.S. public opinion to the degree that Mr.

Nixon would find it inadvisable to sign the agreement.

The interview is written up briefly in "American Admirals" by Edgar F. Puryear Jr., published by Naval Institute Press.

I hope Mr. Botkin's "Ride the Thunder" and my review will establish an accurate perspective on the meaning and significance of Vietnam and result in a renewed, honorable depiction of the war.

Rear Adm. Jeremiah Denton, U.S. Navy (retired), is a former U.S. senator from Alabama.



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RESORT, from B1

http://jtrcc.org
 The Ding Le Mei House, a 10-bedroom, six bathroom dwelling, can accommodate two to four people in each bedroom.
 The ridge cottages can house up to two people per cottage. One-bedroom apartments that have a full kitchen and a private terrace at each unit are also available. The last accommodation option is The Caravansary, which is an inn surrounding a courtyard designed by renowned architect Frank Lloyd Wright. Each room in the caravansary

has a fireplace. Many of the buildings on the grounds are made of stones found on the property and were built outside the norm, meaning the rooms, windows and closets are not square-shaped.
 Although different groups use the retreat center to host their meetings, classes or concerts, many times they invite community members to join them. According to the retreat center's monthly newsletter, patrons are invited to attend regular festivals, concerts, Tai Chi classes, monthly drum circles, Sunday services, and meditation class-

es. Many of these activities are free of charge, but donations are appreciated to help pay for the room.
 Brown, a Milwaukee, Wis., native, said programs like the ones offered throughout the facility provide a great outlet to relax.
 To get to the retreat center from the Combat Center, take Highway 62 toward Joshua Tree and turn left on Rice Road just before the Home Depot. The retreat center will be visible directly after turning.
 For more information, call the retreat center at 365-8371 or visit their Web site, http://www.jtrcc.org.



LESLIE SHAW

The Koi pond at the center of The Joshua Tree Retreat, Conference and Wellness Resort is graced with a metal cactus sculpture and points towards the cafeteria building designed by famous architect Frank Lloyd Wright.



CPL. NICOLE A. LAVINE

Affliction fighters pose with Marines and sailors at Camp Wilson after an autograph and photo session at the Camp Wilson Exchange Sunday.

FIGHTERS, from B1

traveled further west to visit units preparing for deployments at Camp Wilson.
 There, Marines and sailors with dirty hands and slung weapons lined up inside the Camp Wilson Exchange to meet and greet with the fighters.
 A raffle was offered at the exchange to give the warriors a chance to win one of three Affliction T-shirts signed by former Ultimate Fighting Challenge light heavyweight champion Chuck Liddell, as well as an Affliction leather jacket.

Other items, such as exchange gift cards and an Affliction poster board, were also raffled off.
 "It's good to know there are still people who care," said Cpl. Dan C. Williams, a logistics vehicle system operator with CLB-46, and native of Newtown, Conn.
 Williams and a few other Marines stayed at the exchange through the entire visit to "soak in all the Affliction" they could.
 After the last unit T-shirt and poster was signed, the group gathered as many Marines and sailors as possible for a group photo in

front of Affliction's stretch Hummer outside the exchange.
 "It's the least we can do," said Rutten, a former UFC heavyweight champion and member of the Affliction broadcast team. "Our fights don't mean [anything] compared to your fight. When we make a mistake, the ref [referee] just stops the fight."
 Atencio said the team planned to visit Marine Corps Air Station Miramar, Calif., the following day. Additional trips to Germany and Japan are also on the group's schedule in the near future.

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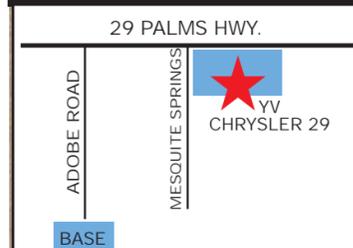
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