

OBSERVATION Post

MARINE CORPS AIR GROUND COMBAT CENTER

JANUARY 15, 2010 SERVING THE TWENTYNINE PALMS COMMUNITY SINCE 1957 VOL. 53 ISSUE 2

Marine-hosted forum promotes Afghan solutions for Afghan problems

CPL. ZACHARY J. NOLA
REGIMENTAL COMBAT TEAM 7

FORWARD OPERATING BASE CAFERTTA, Afghanistan – Third Battalion, 4th Marine Regiment blended the old with the new when they hosted a large shura, Jan. 9, where tribal elders from the city of Delaram, surrounding villages, and towns situated in the nearby provinces of Farah and Helmand, came to talk with one another about local concerns and hear from the local government.

When most Americans think “government” they likely think of the president, the constitution and Washington D.C., where elected officials gather to help run their nation.

Most Afghans, howev-

er, know very little about centralized government. When not ruled by communists, soviets, warlords or the Taliban, Afghans have chosen to govern themselves through tribal means.

While this tribal rule is similar to most other forms of government with rules, customs, traditions and village elders acting as leaders, it has presented challenges to Afghan and coalition forces, and the reconstruction effort they support.

One challenge is showing support for the Afghan government while at the same time respecting Afghan tradition.

However, the shura on Jan. 9 incorporated the ancient tribal tradition with the modern day

See AFGHAN, A4



CPL. ZACHARY J. NOLA

An Afghan man listens as a member of the Afghan National Police speaks during a shura hosted by 3rd Battalion, 4th Marine Regiment, Jan. 9. At the shura, tribal elders from the city of Delaram and the surrounding villages, including those from towns situated in the nearby provinces of Farah and Helmand, came to talk with one another about local concerns and hear from the local government.

2/7 makes history as 31st MEU BLT



STAFF SGT. MICHAEL A. FREEMAN

Marines and sailors from Battalion Landing Team 2nd Battalion, 7th Marine Regiment, exit a plane upon arrival on Okinawa, Japan, Jan. 8. The Marines and sailors of BLT 2/7 will serve as the ground combat element of the 31st Marine Expeditionary Unit during its upcoming Spring Patrol of the Asia-Pacific region. Lt. Col. John Reed, the battalion's commanding officer, said this is the first time since the Korean War the battalion has served as an amphibious assault force and the first time in the battalion's history it has served as a BLT.

STAFF SGT. MICHAEL A. FREEMAN
31ST MARINE EXPEDITIONARY UNIT

KADENA AIR BASE, OKINAWA, Japan – Though Marines have been deploying alongside their Navy brethren for more than 234 years, there is still room for new adventure and first-

time experience within the Corps' ranks. The Marines and sailors of 2nd Battalion, 7th Marines, can testify to that fact as they prepare to embark on the unit's inaugural deployment with the 31st Marine Expeditionary Unit.

“This is the first time 2/7 has served as an amphibious landing force since Inchon,

and our first opportunity ever to serve as a battalion landing team,” said Lt. Col. John Reed, the Battalion Landing Team 2/7 commanding officer.

Based in the Mojave Desert at Marine Corps Air Ground Combat Center Twentynine Palms, Calif., the unit trained for and participated in desert operations during two deployments

in support of Operation Iraqi Freedom between January 2005 and August 2007. From April to August 2008 they engaged in heavy fighting, conducted Counter Insurgency Operations and assisted with the development of the Afghan National Police Force

See BLT, A8

Procrastinators might miss reenlistment boat

CPL. R. LOGAN KYLE
COMBAT CORRESPONDENT

With nearly a quarter of the fiscal year gone, boat spaces for certain military occupational specialties are rapidly being filled. This could leave many Marines stuck in the harbor.

According to the Manpower and Reserve Affairs Web site, <https://www.manpower.usmc.mil>, a boat space is a reenlistment opportunity on a particular MOS. Each MOS has only a certain number of boat spaces available for Marines to reenlist in. Once all the boat spaces in a particular MOS have been filled, no more opportunities exist for Marines to reenlist in that MOS.

Staff Sgt. Xavisus Gayden, the career retention specialist for

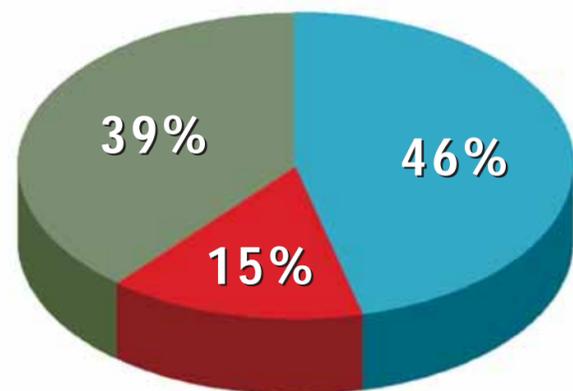
Headquarters Battalion, said the best way for Marines to avoid losing a spot in their job field, or be forced to reenlist in a different MOS, is to act fast.

“Marines should see their [career retention specialist] in April prior to their fiscal year,” said Gayden, a Monroe, La., native. Fiscal years start October 1 and end September 30 of the following year.

“We have just recently lost 300 boat spaces within the past two days,” he said. “So, waiting around to see what's going to happen in your life or going back home on leave before you're [End of Active Service] to see how the civilian sector is will no longer be an option for some first term or career

See SPACES, A7

Manpower and Reserve Affairs enlisted retention survey



- Marines prepared to reenlist in 2010
- On the fence
- Getting out

2/7 corpsman honored with home in Houston

PVT. MICHAEL T. GAMS
COMBAT CORRESPONDENT

HOUSTON – “But daddy doesn't talk,” said two-year-old A.J. Thompson to his mother Ivonne at the hospital visiting his father, a hospital corpsman with 2nd Battalion, 7th Marine Regiment, who was seriously wounded during his second deployment to Iraq with the battalion in 2007.

Ivonne immediately responded, “Daddy doesn't talk yet, but he will.”

Petty Officer 2nd Class Anthony Thompson is currently undergoing

intensive therapy at Kessler Rehabilitation Center in New Jersey to help him regain his speech and improve his quality of life after a vehicle-borne improvised explosive device was detonated under an overpass near Fallujah, Iraq where he was standing guard.

Anthony was found unresponsive after the blast and suffered a traumatic brain injury, an incomplete spinal cord injury and a punctured right lung.

Since returning to the U.S., Anthony has made many steps toward recovery, said Ivonne.

“As we continue to go

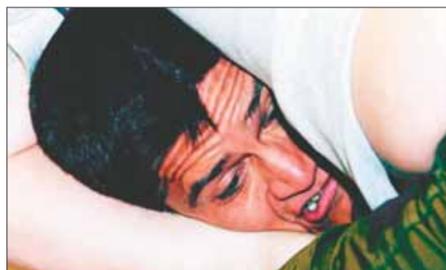
See HOME, A5



Riflemen first ~ See A3



Restoring governance ~ See A4



Foes vanquished in Vegas ~ See B1



Marathon man ~ See B3

Tax Tips

IRS Tax Tip 2010 #6

The Internal Revenue Service urges people to use care and caution when choosing a tax preparer. Remember, you are legally responsible for what's on your tax return even if it was prepared by another individual or firm.

Most tax return preparers are professional, honest and provide excellent service to their clients. However, unscrupulous tax return preparers do exist and can cause considerable financial and legal problems for their clients. Therefore, it's important to find a qualified tax professional.

The following tips will help you choose a preparer who will offer the best service for your tax preparation needs.

1. Check the person's qualifications. Ask if the preparer is affiliated with a professional organization which provides its members with continuing education and resources and holds them to a code of ethics.

2. Check on the preparer's history. Check to see if the preparer has any questionable history with the Better Business Bureau, the state's board of accountancy for certified public accountants or the state's bar association for attorneys.

3. Find out about their service fees. Avoid preparers who base their fee on a percentage of the amount of your refund or those who claim they can obtain larger refunds than other preparers.

4. Make sure the tax preparer is accessible. Make sure you will be able to contact the tax preparer after the return has been filed, even after April 15, in case questions arise.

5. Provide all records and receipts needed to prepare your return. Most reputable preparers will request to see your records and receipts and will ask you multiple questions to determine your total income and your qualifications for expenses, deductions and other items.

6. Never sign a blank return. Avoid tax preparers that ask you to sign a blank tax form.

7. Review the entire return before signing it. Ask questions and make sure you understand everything and are comfortable with the accuracy of the return before you sign it.

8. Make sure the preparer signs the form. A paid preparer must sign the return as required by law. Although the preparer signs the return, you are responsible for the accuracy of every item on your return. The preparer must also give you a copy of the return.

You can report abusive tax preparers and suspected tax fraud to the IRS on Form 3949-A, Information Referral or by sending a letter to Internal Revenue Service, Fresno, CA 93888. Download Form 3949-A from <http://www.irs.gov> or order by mail at 800-829-3676.

Centerspeak

Why is Dr. Martin Luther King Jr. Day important for our country?

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



CPL. QUINTON TILLMAN
COMPANY E, 3RD LIGHT ARMORED RECONNAISSANCE BATTALION

"Because he is a historical figure and history is important."



1ST LT. JAMES KAVANAGH
COMPANY C, MARINE CORPS COMMUNICATIONS-ELECTRONICS SCHOOL

"It shows if you stand up to oppressors you can achieve anything."



GUNNERY SGT. FREDDY ARMIO
COMBAT LOGISTICS BATTALION 5

"It exemplifies the best example of standing up for what is right."

Hot Topics

COMBAT CENTER TAX OFFICE

Free and accurate tax filing will soon be available through the base tax office in building 1651 on 7th Street. Starting Jan. 25, tax center personnel will be available to answer any tax-related questions. The tax office will be open for walk-in customers from 8 a.m. to 3:30 p.m., beginning Feb. 1. Appointments will be available starting Feb. 16 from 8 a.m. to 5 p.m. For more information, questions, or to schedule appointments, call 830-4829.

H1N1 VACCINE STILL AVAILABLE

The Naval Hospital is now providing H1N1 vaccines to all beneficiaries and Department of Defense civilians who request the vaccine. Active duty personnel will receive their vaccine through their battalion or regimental aid stations. For questions, please call Cmdr. Carol Grush at 830-2626 or the Preventive Medicine technicians at 830-2002.

HI DESERT PONY LEAGUE

Signups for the Hi Desert Pony League for baseball and softball are set to begin Saturday from 10 a.m. to 3 p.m. at Luckie Park in Twentynine Palms. Additional signups will occur Jan. 16 and 23, and Feb. 6 and 13 at the same time and location. Call 424-6329 or 910-787-2175, or log on to <http://29hdpl.clubspaces.com> for more information.

COMBAT CENTER BAND LOOKING FOR MARINE PIANO PLAYER

The Combat Center Band is looking for a Marine from private first class through staff sergeant who can read music and perform in various styles like Latin, swing, rock, and pop. An audition is required. For more information, contact Gunnery Sgts. Yesenia Rodriguez-Hower or Richard Nunley at 830-6635 or 830-6404.



Report any suspicious activity immediately which may be a sign of terrorism, including:

1. Surveillance
2. Suspicious questioning
3. Tests of security
4. Acquiring supplies
5. Suspicious persons
6. Trial runs
7. Deploying assets

830-3937



Wheeww, those drills are killers, huh?



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

SUDOKU #1691

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CROSSWORD AND SUDOKU PUZZLES COURTESY OF © 2010 HOMETOWN CONTENT

School Liaison Information

Question: As a mother of two children, I am finding it hard to maintain our normal routines while my husband is deployed. Is it really important for the children to maintain those same routines during the deployment?

Answer: As adults, every day routines may seem monotonous and boring. They can also make the days manageable, especially for children. Kids thrive in a consistent environment and knowing what is coming next in the day or the week is very important. This gives them a feeling of control and security and is extremely important for our children who are in the midst of a deployment cycle.

Every family needs to set their own routines, but remember, research shows regular homework time, family dinners at least three times per week and an appropriate daily bedtime are three parts of a routine which help a child succeed in school.

For more information, please contact
smbplmsmccsschoolliaison@usmc.mil or call 830-1574.



Combat Center Spotlight



Name: Lt. Cmdr. Chris Delbridge
Hometown: Coolidge, Ariz.
Job Title: Radiologist
Unit: Robert E. Bush Naval Hospital
Job Duties: "I take care of all diagnostic imagery - CT Scans, X-rays, ultrasounds and biopsies."
What do you like most about your job: "It's part of the solution. Patients go to the emergency room and radiology is a vital part of the diagnostic process."
Hobbies: "Snowboarding, weightlifting - pretty much anything that involves being active."
Military service: "Less than a year active duty. I did a program where I signed a contract to be a Naval physician and then went to school for 14 years."
Time at Combat Center: Six months.

Marine Corps History

Jan. 15, 1865

Approximately 365 Marines attack Fort Fisher at Wilmington, N.C., as part of a Naval landing force.

TEA TIME

[puzzle Solutions on A8]

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| ACROSS | DOWN | |
| 1. Have a cow? | 1. "High Hopes" lyricist Sammy | 30. Start the kitty |
| 6. Sumter or McHenry | 2. James who won a posthumous Pulitzer love | 31. Wine bottle datum |
| 10. Pacific salmon | 3. Doctor Zhivago's love | 32. Engage, as gears |
| 14. One more time | 4. Vigorous quality | 33. Prefix with lock or knock |
| 15. Video gel additive | 5. Part of OED: Abbr. | 37. Fabric characteristics |
| 16. Gung-ho | 6. Hot breakfast fare | 38. Pathways to the WWW |
| 17. Place to grow parsley or sage | 7. Word after "ye" | 39. Tampa Bay player, formerly |
| 19. Video recorder brand | 8. Beluga delicacy | 41. Beanery offering |
| 20. Within a stone's throw | 9. Walter Gross/Jack Lawrence classic tune | 42. Far from sober |
| 21. Polygraph detection | 10. Toy-mouse stuffing, maybe | 44. Calfless cow |
| 22. Allergen from a pet | 11. "Ars Amatoria" poet | 45. Many John Wayne movies |
| 24. "This weighs ___!" | 12. Drone's home | 46. High-five sound |
| 26. Prefix with retirement | 13. Evidence of a gas leak | 49. Bonkers |
| 27. Second view at a homer, say | 14. Zillions | 50. Morales of "NYPD Blue" |
| 32. ___ Polo | 15. General ___'s chicken | 51. Kingly address |
| 34. Fish caught in pots | 16. Pedometer activator | 52. Plays for a sap |
| 35. Suffix with butyl | 17. Discount-rack abbr. | 54. Banjoist Scruggs |
| 36. Professor 'iggins, to Eliza | 18. Katmandu's land | 55. Just sitting around |
| 37. Liable to topple | 19. Take a powder | 56. Affix a brand to, e.g. Eggs, in labs |
| 39. Flash drive filler | | 60. Don't just sit there |
| 40. ___ Jeanne d'Arc | | |

OBSERVATION POST

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CLB-7 Marines, sailors sharpen basic warrior skills

CPL. MONICA C. ERICKSON

COMBAT CORRESPONDENT

As the weather dropped to near-freezing conditions at the Combat Center's Acorn training area, the Marines and sailors of Transportation Support Company, Combat Logistics Battalion 7, were waking up before dawn to take part in multiple classes to improve their basic warrior skills this week.

Training began Tuesday morning after everyone woke up to find a wildlife welcoming committee of playful coyotes sniffing through packs and climbing into their tents.

After the coyotes retreated into the desert, the warriors broke up into their designated platoons and began their training.

During the exercises, the Marines were expected to show leadership skills by stepping up as fire team and squad leaders' and taking charge of the junior Marines. The leaders were responsible for accountability and ensuring every Marine and sailor knew when and where to be every day.

The purpose of this training is to strengthen leadership, combat and military occupational specialty skills, said 1st Lt. Saba Safiari, the company's executive officer. Every Marine has to be able to function as a rifleman and be proficient in his MOS.

Each morning, every platoon sat through informal refresher classes on land navigation, motor transportation, convoy operations, landing support operations, perimeter defense of a forward operating base, and other MOS-related instructions.

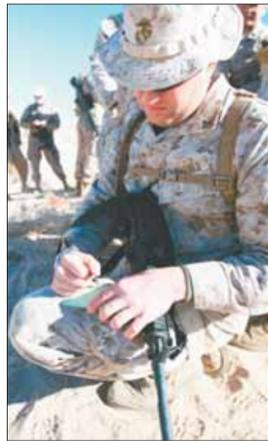
"This training will help us see where the Marines stand," said Gunnery Sgt. Klaus Springer, the

Transportation Support Co. gunnery sergeant. "We have a lot of new Marines who just checked in and we also have a few Marines who just got back from deployment. We'll try to mix them together to see where the company stands."

A few of the MOS-specific classes consisted of how much weight can be carried internally and externally on different helicopters, what types of slings are needed to carry vehicles and equipment, and the hand and arm signal communication with pilots.

In the midst of the training, Cpl. Naomi Bachochin, a landing support specialist with 3rd Platoon, said she wished for a hot shower, but felt the need for knowledge far outweighed the want of personal comfort.

"This training will help prepare us for Afghanistan, and even though we are pulling out of Iraq, we still have Marines over there," said the Columbus, Ohio native. "It is very important to keep training because you never know what is going to pop up."



CPL. MONICA C. ERICKSON

Lance Cpl. James Burk, a logistics vehicle system operator with 1st Platoon, sketches a diagram on how to properly defend a forward operating base Tuesday.



CPL. MONICA C. ERICKSON

Cpl. Jeffrey Phillips, a landing support specialist with 3rd Platoon, Transportation Support Company, explains situations Marines in his military occupational specialty might encounter in a combat situation by using sandbags, cardboard, rolled up tents and rocks as buildings, a flight deck and hangars Tuesday at a sand table discussion during the company's week-long field training exercise at the Combat Center's Acorn training area.



CPL. MONICA C. ERICKSON

First Lt. Saba Safiari, the executive officer of Transportation Support Co., CLB-7, explains to Sgt. Paul Black, a squad leader in 1st Platoon, how to properly place a rifle squad when defending a forward operating base Tuesday.

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TOUGH MINDED OPTIMISM

by Lou Gerhardt



As we look forward to observing Martin Luther King, Jr. Day next Monday, I would remind you that Dr. King was a tough minded optimist.

I met Dr. King in 1961 when he was the guest of honor at a reception and dinner in our church in Seattle. He spoke to us that night in a way that made us feel that he was totally committed to a course of action that would ultimately prevail but only after an extremely difficult struggle that would require heroic sacrifices by many people.

Listen to these words spoken only hours before he was shot and killed: "We've got some difficult days ahead but it really doesn't matter with me now because I've been to the mountaintop. I won't mind. Like anybody I would like to live a long time—longevity has its place—but I'm not concerned about that now. I just want to do God's will and he's allowed me to go up the mountain and I've looked over and I've seen the Promised Land. I may not get there with you but I want you to know tonight that we as a people will get to the Promised Land. So I'm happy tonight and I'm not fearing any man—mine eyes have seen the glory of the coming of the Lord."

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Now Zad governor sees promising future



CPL. ZACHARY J. NOLA

Sayed Murad Agah, the district governor of Now Zad, speaks to villagers in the Now Zad area in Afghanistan.

1ST LT. JOE RENEY

REGIMENTAL COMBAT TEAM 7

NOW ZAD, Afghanistan – The rebuilding process has begun, and leadership is shaping again in Now Zad, Afghanistan, but there will be challenges. Sayed Murad Agha, the Now Zad district governor, a former Pashtu language student teacher and once an assistant to the Helmand provincial governor, faces those challenges with the people.

When Agha arrived at the district center, he immediately surveyed the area, asked questions and addressed concerns of the local Afghans. He visited the medical facility where Marines and sailors of 3rd Battalion, 4th Marine Regiment, provided care for local Afghans and spoke with local shopkeepers as he made his way through the recently-cleared streets of Now Zad to see what progress had been made.

Although locals conveyed many concerns, Agha had some of his own. Those concerns centered on the welfare of the community, mainly getting people back into their homes and back to work.

"I would like to work on rebuilding the school and getting people back to work, so people can return to their lives," Agha said through an interpreter. "I'd like to get the teachers back."

When walking the streets of Now Zad, once the second-largest city in Helmand province, it was obvious the city used to be well organized, not to mention, beautiful. However, after several years

of insurgent activity, this part of Now Zad became uninhabitable for Afghan families. Afghan families that once prospered here could no longer, because the enemies of Afghanistan would not allow peace in the area.

Marine and Afghan national security forces have cleared the area of the Now Zad market and district center to allow the people to return and begin rebuilding.

The future of the market, the district center and ultimately the whole of Now Zad is already experiencing rapid progress.

"The Marines have done a lot to get the people back to work," Agha said through an interpreter. "The people here really want to get back to work and are tired of the enemy activity."

To assist in the rebuilding process, Marines and ANSF are providing security and civil affairs support.

Marines see great benefit for the community in having the district governor present for the rebuilding process.

"The people here haven't had any form of government for four years," said Capt. Jason Brezler, the civil affairs officer for 3rd Bn., 4th Marines, from Bronx, N.Y. "To have a committed and educated man like [the district governor] here to rebuild is a good thing."

With the return of governance and continued counterinsurgency operations, including 150 children back in school and shops opening in the market daily, the people will once again be able to live and prosper in Now Zad.

AFGHAN, from A1

centralization.

"The provincial governor and the district governor are here," said Maj. James Coffman, 40, the civil affairs officer for 3rd Bn., 4th Marines. "This is designed specifically for them as a forum for them to gain more momentum, more trust and confidence and to show the populace here that the government of Afghanistan is here, [the Afghan government] is going to stay here and going to help [the populace] rebuild."

The meeting also helped 3rd Bn., 4th Marines, Afghan National Security Forces, International Security Assistance Forces and non-government organizations meet many Afghan elders for the first time.

"This shura is great opportunity for all of us to develop good relationships with key leaders in the local area," said Coffman a native of Rome, Ga. "It's a good opportunity for us to get a lot of the leaders in one location at one time. Some of [the elders present], especially those from some of the smaller villages and some of the villagers further out, we've never met."

While hearing from local leaders and meeting coalition forces will help the process to secure and rebuild Delaram, the primary goal of the meeting



CPL. ZACHARY J. NOLA

Afghan men speak with each other before the official start of a shura, Jan. 9. Third Battalion, 4th Marine Regiment recently blended the old with the new when they hosted the shura, where tribal elders from the city of Delaram, and the surrounding villages in the nearby provinces of Farah and Helmand came to talk with one another about local concerns and hear from the local government.

was to facilitate a discussion between local Afghans on how they can stabilize and secure the area themselves.

The biggest thing is to help the Afghan people find solutions to Afghan problems, said Coffman.

"We need to see everything through an Afghan lens and the easiest way for us to do that is to say 'here's the problem' and take their advice on how to solve it and then help facilitate and support them in that process," Coffman said.

While security was the topic of most conversations,

other concerns included water, reconstruction and winterization needs.

"I would like to ask [local leaders] if they are able to provide electricity because winter is coming and I would like to have some heat," said a local school teacher, through an interpreter.

During his address to the shura, Col. George S. Amland, deputy commander of Marine Expeditionary Brigade – Afghanistan, emphasized coalition support for the areas elders and government officials while assuring local leaders that such support would not impede Afghan culture and traditions.

"International forces, and Americans, and Afghan National Army will come soon in greater numbers. They will support your district governor, they will support your provincial governor and they will support your local security forces. They will provide once again that opportunity for you to choose the path that the people of Delaram will take," Amland said. "And while we are here, we want you to know we have the utmost respect for your religion, your culture and

your customs. We are not here to interfere with any of them, we are not here to take your property, we are not here to change your religion and we are not here to change any of your customs."

While centralized government is not common in this part of the world the events of Jan. 9, showed a democratic, Islamic republic can coincide with Afghan traditions.

Some Afghans present traveled a mile or so to attend the meeting, others traveled from farther out. But the point isn't about who traveled farther. The point is they came. They came to work with coalition forces, the government, each other and except the responsibility of supporting a government run by Afghans for Afghans.

"We are here to help you rebuild your community and offer you that opportunity that even Americans take as one of our most precious rights," said Amland. "It is the right for you to choose a better life and to do it without looking over your shoulder or worrying about someone else taking it away from you."



CPL. ZACHARY J. NOLA

Afghan men listen as a member of the Afghan National Police speaks during a shura, Jan. 9. Third Battalion, 4th Marine Regiment, recently blended the old with the new when they hosted the shura, where tribal elders from in and around Delaram came to talk about local issues.

Spirit and Truth Worship Center
 Perry L. Ford, Senior Pastor
 Service Times:
 Sunday Morning Worship 9:45
 Wednesday Night Bible Study 7:00
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 4751 Adobe Rd.
 29 Palms, Ca. 92277
 spirit_truthworshipcenter@yahoo.com

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HOME, from A1

through different [rehabilitation centers], Anthony continues to progress," Ivonne said. "His eyes are open. He is awake all day and sleeps at night. He responds to myself, his son, and men in uniform – he seems to sit at attention for them."

Ivonne said Thompson can make facial expressions to tell her if he is in pain and can move his hands, arms and his left leg.

"All are signs he is progressing and improving," she said. "They are tiny increments of improvement, but they mean a lot in the grand scheme of things. Who knows how far he will continue to come."

While rehabilitation centers are helping him improve his motor functions, the non-profit organization Homes for Our Troops is helping his entire family improve their way of life.

The organization kicked off a three-day 'Build Brigade' Jan. 7-9, providing the family with a weather-tight structure, built specifically with Anthony in mind.

During the Build Brigade, more than 300 volunteers showed up to help erect the house and provide support for the project, said Vicky Thomas, the media relations specialist with Homes for Our Troops.

According to the organization's Web site, <http://www.homeforourtroops.org>, the organization's mission is to provide specially adapted homes for veterans who were seriously wounded in Iraq and Afghanistan since Sept. 11, 2001, at no cost to the veterans.

Ivonne said she contacted the organization shortly after her husband was wounded, and the voice she

heard on the other end of the phone told her Homes for Our Troops had been expecting her call.

Ivonne went through the application process in March and soon after, the Thompsons were on their way towards a place to call home.

In no time at all, she just watched a house rise from an area where days prior there was only a concrete slab, she said in a phone interview.

"In four to six months we will have a house designed so that Anthony's wheelchair — his rather wide electrical wheelchair can make it into every single room in the house," said Ivonne, a Humble, Texas native. "The doors will all be wider, there

aren't going to be bumps on the thresholds, there will be a roll-in shower built for Anthony.

Ivonne said she is very grateful to everyone in the community for their volunteer efforts, and their concern for her husband and family.

"It truly is one of those moments when you think humanity is lost, and a group of wonderful people comes and shows you kind and good-hearted people are everywhere, just waiting for an opportunity to help in any way they can," Ivonne said. "I'm very thankful the community has honored him in such a manner. They have given him a home — a great home where we can raise a family."



COURTESY PHOTO

In an undated family photo, Petty Officer 2nd Class Anthony Thompson, a hospital corpsman with 2nd Bn., 7th Marines, lays next to his son, A.J. Homes for Our Troops, an organization which specializes in building customized homes for seriously wounded veterans at no cost, started building a home for him, his wife, Ivonne, and A.J. Jan. 8. The house will be completed in four to six months.

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COURTESY PHOTO

A special house stands two days into a three-day 'Build Brigade' project Jan. 8 in Houston. The house, slated to be completed in four to six months, is being built by the non-profit organization Homes for Our Troops for Petty Officer 2nd Class Anthony Thompson, a hospital corpsman formerly with 2nd Battalion, 7th Marine Regiment. The organization builds specialized homes for seriously wounded veterans at no cost to the veterans or their families. Thompson was wounded after an improvised explosive device detonated under a bridge he was guarding during his second deployment to Iraq in 2007.

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(from left to right) Renauke Bain, Angela Nishnic, Brittney Wolcott, Yekaterina Worthley and Yeseida Ramos were certified as dental technicians by the American Red Cross at the Village Center Wednesday after completing 750 hours of volunteer work. Nishnic was also recognized as being the honor graduate of her class. The certificates allow them to work as dental assistants on all military installations. After undergoing both an individual and panel selection process, the students spent about eight months in dental courses, gaining classroom and on-the-job training. The Red Cross tries to hold three classes a year with the Dental Clinic. To be eligible for the internship, applicants must be over the age of 18, and must be a military dependent with identification, have a high school diploma and a completed application. For more information call the Red Cross at 830-6685.

Combat engineers clear routes, build bonds through hardship

II MARINE EXPEDITIONARY FORCE

AL ASAD, Iraq - The Red Horse Compound aboard Al Asad Air Base, Iraq, is quiet with the exception of the low grumble of an idling 7-ton truck and the conversations of the few mechanics working on it. Most of the Marines of Company B, 3rd Combat Engineer Battalion, are sound asleep after last night's route clearance mission. Gunnery Sgt. Deon Farmer, the company maintenance officer in charge, walks the lot as he supervises his Marines' daily efforts to make sure the numerous vehicles in the company's motor pool are combat ready.

In the combat operations center, Sgt. Shamel Edrees, the day watch officer, monitors the Blue Force Tracker, which displays the location of 2nd Platoon.

Second Platoon, led by platoon commander 1st Lt. Sean Knapp and platoon sergeant Staff Sgt. Thomas Esquivel, is still on the road to Camp Korean Village, clearing hundreds of miles of highway for the large convoy behind them. The hard-packed sand of western Iraq rolls by slowly as the Marines scan the roadway for anything that looks out of place. In the daylight, they can see for miles in all directions, but their focus is always on the narrow sections of road that each has been assigned to watch. To pass the time and maintain alertness, the Marines tell stories of past experiences with the platoon.

Cpl. Jacob Flick, who operates the hydraulic arm in the Mine Resistant Ambush Protected vehicles used in route clearance missions, recalls one particular story that has shaped the personality of the unit.

"We were at [Marine Corps Mountain Warfare Training Center] Bridgeport, Calif., attached to 3rd Battalion, 4th Marine Regiment, and we were on this really long march in the snow," Flick said. "We walked for what seemed like forever, and one of the guys [got hypothermia]. It felt like such a disaster, like it would never be over, but the whole time we just kept laughing and telling each other 'one more [kilometer]; just one more [kilometer].'"

"Humor through hardship" has since become the motto of 2nd Platoon, and it has served them well.

At nearly the same time but aboard Camp Ramadi, 3rd Platoon finished their post-combat checks and debriefs, and their platoon commander, 1st Lt. Cooper Carter, sat down to write his after action report and talk over upcoming missions with his platoon sergeant, Staff Sgt. Daniel Belec. The platoon picked up and moved from Al Asad to Al Taqaddum at the beginning of the deployment, and later moved again to Camp Ramadi, always operating away from the rest of the company. Now that these challenges and many others have been overcome, Carter looks back in amazement at the way his Marines have performed.

"I was always impressed to see that the Marines of 3rd Platoon never failed to carry out their mission with excellence," he said. "They proved they could carry out their job seamlessly, no matter what situation they were presented. Not only did the Marines know their jobs to the fullest and operate as a well-oiled machine tactically on the road, but the Marines also grew into a tight well-oiled machine as a family."

While the platoon was busy with missions most nights and preparation and maintenance on the few other nights, the Marines made use of every free minute to make sure they had a good time.

"It was a remarkable sight for me to see a platoon of 35 Marines from all different walks of life mesh into an unbreakable group of brothers," Carter concluded.

Back on Al Asad, as the afternoon sun heats up the cans in the Tarawa billeting area, 1st Platoon's Marines will be swarming about the motor pool, conducting their pre-combat vehicle inspections, loading weapons and ammunition, and looking each other over to ensure they have all their gear properly situated.

As the Marines go about their various tasks 1st Lt. Rob Caldwell, 1st Platoon commander, and his platoon sergeant, Gunnery Sgt. Zellard Lemon, will be doing their own mission preparation, checking up on recent enemy activity, weather reports and friendly

See BUILD, A8



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SPACES, from A1

Marines. The reenlistment requirements may be the same but a Marine's chance for reenlistment is not."

By the time undecided Marines go home to search for a job leading up to their EAS, the boat spaces in their MOS could close out, he added.

This comes at a time when the Marine Corps has already met its growth goal of 202,000 active duty Marines, initially targeted for 2011. Having met this goal, the Corps has scaled back on bank-busting bonuses like the ones offered for high-demand specialties merely two years ago. However, bonuses are still being offered for most

job fields, Gayden said.

Gayden said the rumor that only certain, more highly demanded MOSs are forcing Marines to get out or reenlist in another job field is not true.

"I would look at it like this – all MOSs are high-demand job fields," he said. "The reason I say this is because they are going fast, and the MOSs that are open may not even have a school seat. In cases such as these, we can't submit Marines for those MOSs."

However, there are still alternative options for Marines who will be left without the chance to stay in their job field.

"Marines should start looking at lateral moves if

their primary MOS is reaching its [first term alignment plan] quota," Gayden said.

Marines uninterested in reenlisting in a different job field, or who would like to live the civilian life but stay Marine, have many options. They can join the Marine Reserves, Selected Marine Corps Reserve, the Immobilized Augment Detachment and the Active Reserves.

Don't wait until the last minute to decide what you want. Research your options and make a choice so you aren't the Marine in the harbor waving goodbye, wondering what could have been.

For more information about reenlistment options contact your unit CRS.



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STAFF SGT. MICHAEL A. FREEMAN

Col. Paul L. Damren (left), the 31st Marine Expeditionary Unit's commanding officer, greets a Marine from Battalion Landing Team 2nd Battalion, 7th Marine Regiment, on the Kadena Air Base flight line in Okinawa, Japan Jan. 8. BLT 2/7 will serve as the MEU's ground combat element during its upcoming spring patrol of the Asia-Pacific region.

BLT, from A1

in support of Operation Enduring Freedom.

During this deployment however, the Marines of 2/7 will face a new set of circumstances, terrain and weather conditions, including exercises in the heat and humidity of Thailand's jungles and the tropical rainforests of the Republic of the Philippines. More than 1,100 BLT 2/7 members arrived in Okinawa Jan. 8-10 in anticipation of the MEU's spring patrol, and Reed said his Marines and sailors are up to the task.

"We're absolutely ready for it," said Reed, citing an intense period of work-ups the unit conducted in preparation for the deployment. "We have had the advantage of great people and the time to really focus. We can't wait to get on ship with the 31st MEU."

Staff Sgt. Kevin A. Buegel, a rifle platoon ser-

geant from Company F, BLT 2/7, shares Reed's confidence in his men.

"My Marines are more than ready and as excited as I am about this deployment," he said.

Reed added his Marines and sailors are fortunate as a battalion to be able to focus on a few of the commandant's key priorities.

"We can focus training on amphibious operations, getting back to naval traditions and being at the forefront of combined arms fire and maneuver," he said.

Cpl. Jonathan Metzger, an amphibious assault vehicle crew chief from Co. D, 3rd Assault Amphibian Battalion, BLT 2/7, said when he deployed to Iraq, his unit was trained and employed as an infantry company. However, now he will finally have the opportunity to do the job for which he originally enlisted -

executing amphibious opera-

tions in an expeditionary environment.

"I know this is what I signed up for," said the Enid, Okla. native. "It's a great opportunity to be given this chance."

The MEU's commanding officer, Col. Paul L. Damren, greeted the first wave of incoming BLT 2/7 Marines and sailors on the Kadena Air Base flight line, offering his welcoming remarks, the latest college football scores, and his confidence in the unit.

"BLT 2/7 is making history with this deployment," said Damren. "Their recent combat experiences in Iraq and Afghanistan as well as their thorough pre-deployment training program have prepared them well to fill a critical role as the ground combat element of the MEU. They understand service with America's only full-time forward-deployed Marine Expeditionary Unit carries with it a significant amount of responsibility, and I know without a doubt they will live up to the high expectations we have for them."

During the MEU's spring patrol, BLT 2/7 will deploy alongside fellow MEU subordinate elements, including Marine Medium Helicopter Squadron 265 Reinforced, Marine Attack Squadron 311 and Combat Logistics Battalion 31. The 31st MEU is slated to participate in Exercise Cobra Gold 2010 in the Royal Kingdom of Thailand and Exercise Balikatan in the Republic of the Philippines.

BUILD, from A6

units moving along their route. They'll confirm the times and locations for link-up with the aircraft which will be supporting them, go over their mission roster and deliver the mission brief to the platoon.

Shortly thereafter, the Marines will complete their final pre-combat checks and ground-guide their vehicles out of the motor pool.

Lance Cpl. Jason Sappington, a gunner with 1st Platoon, looks back on one memorable mission.

"I can recall Christmas Eve when we were prepping for a mission," he began. "There was not a single sad face, not a single Marine thinking about anything but the task at hand. That is what is special about 1st Platoon to me; that is what sets us apart. Whether it be winning a flag football game or finding an [improvised explosive device] before it finds us, we are always focused on the task at hand, always focused on mission accomplishment."

Company B, also known as "Bravo Nation," has come a long way since its humble beginnings in Twentynine Palms, Calif., in 2008. The Marines have gained a tremendous amount of knowledge of their military occupational specialties, operations in Iraq, and how to employ the new tools at their disposal. They have learned fast, and they have learned well.

Now as the Marines push toward the successful completion of the company's first deployment, new challenges in future areas of operation await these ready and willing young warriors.

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9	1	7	2	6	5	8	4	3
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Sin City smackdown

PVT. MICHAEL T. GAMS

COMBAT CORRESPONDENT

LAS VEGAS – The warriors of Fight Club 29 battled head-to-head with other Mixed Martial Arts fighters from throughout California, Nevada and Arizona and were crowned overall champions at the Grappling Experience Tournament at the Riviera Hotel and Casino in Las Vegas Saturday.

All 12 fighters medaled and overall the team won 15 medals at the prestigious event.

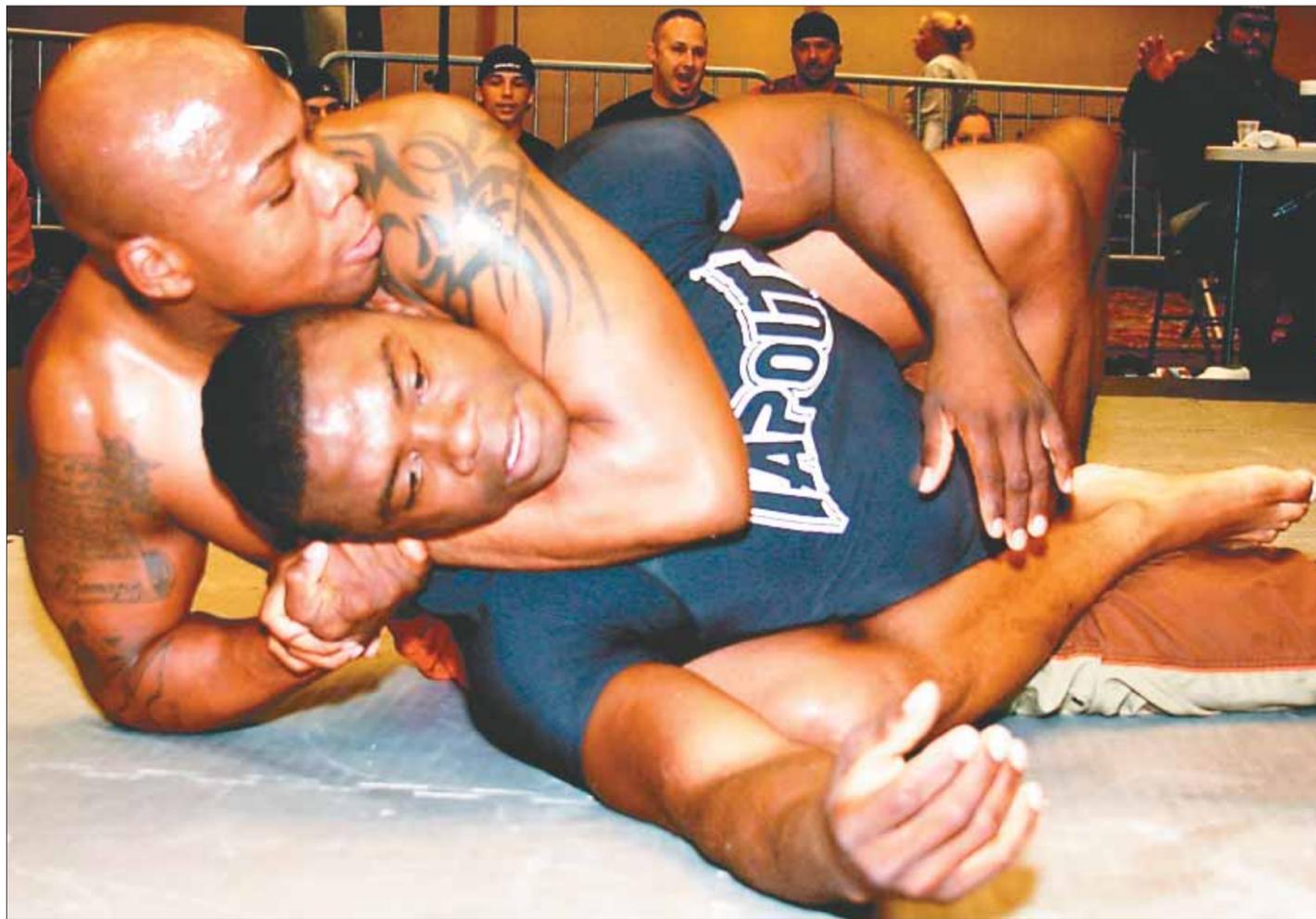
The club also met with Shane Carwin, the Ultimate Fighting Championship heavyweight contender who is slated to compete against Frank Mir for the interim heavyweight title in March. Carwin spoke with the club's fighters, posed for photos and stressed his appreciation for the military.

"These guys are coming up to me wanting to know about my next fight when they are getting ready to go fight a war," the mixed-martial artist said. "If it wasn't for them, my family and I wouldn't be able to live the life we do. It's an honor to meet the Marines."

After spending time with Carwin, the club warmed up and mentally prepared for their upcoming bouts.

"Before the competition started, I was a little nervous," said Arron Stephens, who received a gold medal grappling in the 225-pound, Novice Division. "Once I got on the mat and made that first contact, all that went away. I was just focused on what I needed to do."

The fighters needed to win by either points or submission in four or five-minute bouts. Novice and beginner fighters grappled for four minutes, while



PVT. MICHAEL T. GAMS

Fight Club 29 veteran Omar Askew puts his final opponent, Michael Childs, into a rear naked choke for the win after the pair struggled for 21 minutes in the longest match of the Grappling Experience Tournament in Las Vegas Saturday. Askew won a gold medal in his weight class and a bronze medal in the Intermediate Absolute Division.

intermediate and master fighters battled for five minutes, unless someone submitted, or 'tapped out,' to their opponent.

"People see the sport and think it is mostly physical – size and muscle," said Fight Club 29 veteran Tyler Moug. "What I like about it is how absolutely mental it is. You're on the mat constantly thinking about how you can one-up the other guy – constantly thinking about how you can twist yourself to get a better position on them."

The club got off to a rocky start when Masters Division fighters Darnell Mason, 165-pounds, and Klaus Springer, 200-pounds, both lost their first matches.

However, the momentum shifted in favor of Fight Club 29 after Mason and Springer won their subsequent matches, and Stephens rallied in the beginner heavyweight bracket to defeat Steve LaGrow and Jeff Viles to win the gold medal.

After those victories, Marcos Estrada, the 16-year-old son of a Combat Center Marine, exploded into action, moving quickly and strategically to defeat Michael Lowenthal for yet another gold medal.

Early in the competition, Fight Club 29 head coach Mark M. Geletko was impressed with his team.

"We're not quite to the halfway point," he said. "Everyone is already medaling – it's looking good for us."

To emphasize Geletko's point, Dominic Waters, another 175-pound Fight Club 29 veteran making his debut fight, pounced on his

opponent, Daniel Rhodes, using a triangle-choke to make Rhodes tap out.

Edward Gonzales, a 165-pound intermediate fighter with Fight Club 29, charged hard in his three matches, forcing his opponents to tap out with successive arm bars in less than two minutes each.

When Moug took to the mats in the 185-pound beginner division, most of the tournament spectators shifted their attention to his bouts.

Moug was explosive and relentless. He also won the gold by carefully maneuvering into positions which either gave him points or helped him make his opponents tap out.

Not to be outdone, Omar Askew, a 185-pound intermediate fighter, grappled his way through the

competition, winning gold in his weight class and carrying his victorious momentum to the Intermediate Absolute Division.

"The Absolute Division pretty much shows who is the [most valuable player] in their experience level," Geletko said. "Everyone in the experience level fights everyone who signs up, there are no weight classes. It's the absolute champion."

Askew capped off his tournament by defeating Michael Childs in a grueling 21-minute battle. The pair fought tooth-and-nail before Askew finally gained the upper hand by putting Childs in a rear naked choke which forced Childs to tap out.

Moug also carried his momentum into the Beginner Absolute Division. There he overpowered

Marine Corps Base Camp Pendleton fighter J.R. McGill to win the gold. For his victory, Moug received a set of audio speakers he said he will use at the gym where the club trains.

After Fight Club 29's overwhelming victory, Askew credited their success to the team's positive mental attitude and Geletko's conditioning program. Askew said the club trains hard at the Crossfit Gym, completing what has been dubbed the "Spartan Workout."

Askew also credits Geletko's overall guidance.

"[Geletko] is like a father figure. He's more than a sergeant major, he's more than a coach," Askew said. "He teaches us discipline – mental discipline and physical discipline. He has molded us into a brotherhood."

Fight Club 29 medalists

Gold

Omar Askew	185	Intermediate
Marcos Estrada	155	Teen Intermediate
Edward Gonzales	165	Intermediate
Tyler Moug	185	Beginners and Beginner Absolute
Arron Stephens	225	Novice
Joey Yeampierre	155	Beginners

Silver

Kris Nekuinda	195	Beginners
Dominic Waters	175	Beginners

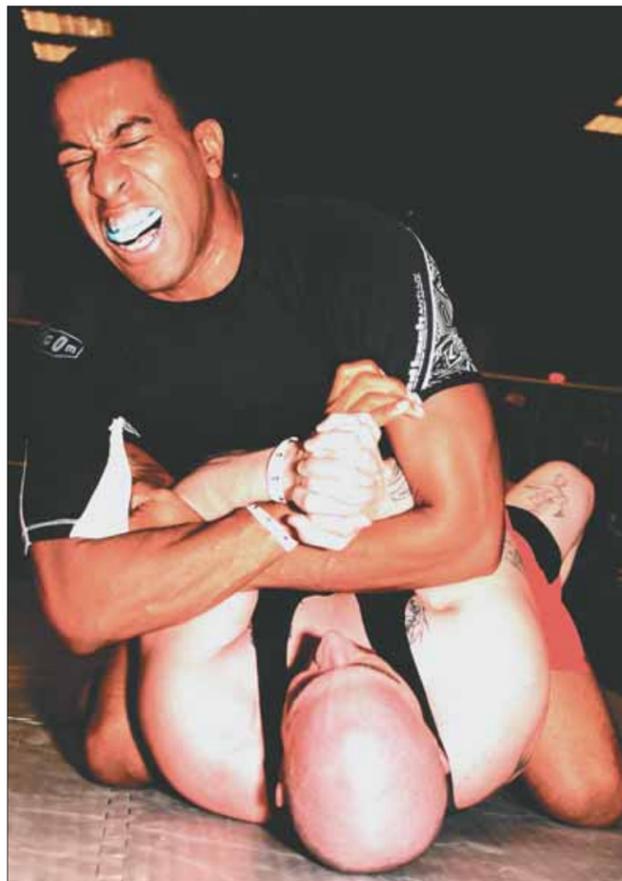
Bronze

Omar Askew	185	Absolute
Marcos Estrada	155	Absolute Teen
Daniel Marquez	155	Beginners
Darnell Mason	165	Masters and Masters Absolute
Klaus Springer	195	Masters



PVT. MICHAEL T. GAMS

Fight Club 29 grappler Edward Gonzales, a 165-pound intermediate fighter, maneuvers against Marine Corps Base Camp Pendleton fighter Callen Montero during the Grappling Experience Tournament in Las Vegas Saturday. Gonzales won his three matches in less than two minutes each and tapped out his three opponents with arm bars.



Darnell Mason, a of Fight Club 29, struggles to win his second bout against Ryan Delaney during the Grappling Experience Tournament in Las Vegas Saturday. Mason won the match, and earned a bronze medal in the 165-pound Masters Division.

To watch a video of the tournament, tune in to the Commander's Access Channel 6, or visit http://www.dvidshub.net/?script=video/video_show.php&id=76914.

PVT. MICHAEL T. GAMS



Local Events

Thelonious Monster and Dogweed
 Description: Unique rock 'n roll from Hollywood
 When: 8 p.m., Friday
 Where: Pappy and Harriet's
 53688 Pioneertown Road, Pioneertown
 For more information call 365-5956 or visit
<http://www.pappyandharriets.com>.

Theater: Opening Night Gala for "Blithe Spirit"
 Description: A Noel Coward comedy
 When: 6 p.m., Friday
 Where: Theatre 29
 73637 Sullivan Road, Twentynine Palms
 For information call 361-4151 or visit
<http://www.theatre29.com>.

Kingsizemaybe, Leslie & the Badgers & Bollweevil
 Description: Alternative country stylings
 When: 8 p.m., Saturday
 Where: Pappy and Harriet's
 53688 Pioneertown Road, Pioneertown
 For more information call 365-5956 or visit
<http://www.pappyandharriets.com>.

Rattlesnake Jake's Metal Mayhem
 Description: Metal bands Arbitrator, Remnants of Man and Cadaver Lore perform
 When: 10 p.m., Saturday
 Where: Rattlesnake Jake's Restaurant and Bar
 51572 29 Palms Highway, Morongo Valley
 For more information call 366-3777 or visit
<http://rattlesnakejakessite.com>.

2010 A Space Odyssey - A Celebration of Our Night Skies
 Description: A multi-dimensional, multi-media event
 When: Free exhibit opens at 5 p.m., interactive show begins at 7 p.m., Saturday
 Where: The Blak Box Theatre
 61231 Twentynine Palms Highway, Joshua Tree
 For more information call 366-3777 or visit
<http://www.hidesertplayhouse.com>.

Lower Desert

Music: Lionel Richie
 Description: The rhythm and blues superstar performs
 When: 8 p.m., Jan. 15
 Where: Fantasy Springs Resort Casino
 84-245 Indio Springs Parkway, Indio
 For more info call 800-827-2946 or visit
<http://www.fantasyspringsresort.com>.

Music: Styx
 Description: The rock and roll legends perform
 When: 9 p.m., Jan. 22
 Where: Agua Caliente
 32-250 Bob Hope Drive, Rancho Mirage
 For more info call 888-999-1995 or visit
<http://hotwatercasino.com>.

Music: Harry Connick Jr.
 Description: Grammy winning singer/pianist performs
 When: 8 p.m., Saturday, Jan. 23
 Where: Fantasy Springs Resort Casino
 84-245 Indio Springs Parkway, Indio
 For more info call 800-827-2946 or visit
<http://www.fantasyspringsresort.com>.

Comedy: Martin Lawrence
 Description: The comedic actor performs standup
 When: 8 p.m., Friday, Feb. 12
 Where: Fantasy Springs Resort Casino
 84-245 Indio Springs Parkway, Indio
 For more info call 800-827-2946 or visit
<http://www.fantasyspringsresort.com>.

Music: Johnny Mathis
 Description: Pop legend performs his hits
 When: 8 p.m., Saturday, Feb. 13
 Where: Agua Caliente
 32-250 Bob Hope Drive, Rancho Mirage
 For more info call 888-999-1995 or visit
<http://hotwatercasino.com>.

Comedy: Larry the Cable Guy
 Description: Blue Collar Comedy legend performs standup
 When: 8 p.m., Saturday, Feb. 20
 Where: Agua Caliente
 32-250 Bob Hope Drive, Rancho Mirage
 For more info call 888-999-1995 or visit
<http://hotwatercasino.com>.

Sunset Cinema

The Sunset Cinema is getting an upgrade
 The theater will be closed from Jan. 8 through Feb. 12 for a lighting project which will enhance your movie experience. We apologize for any inconvenience. The Lifelong Learning Library has movies for check out new releases, classic titles and everything in between. Call 830-6685 for more details or stop by building 1524 to check them out.

Meet the new, updated 'Sherlock Holmes'

NEIL POND
 AMERICAN PROFILE

"Sherlock Holmes"
 Rated PG-13

Scottish author Sir Arthur Conan Doyle wrote several novels and nearly 60 short stories about his most popular fictitious character, the legendary detective Sherlock Holmes, and the cerebral criminologist was portrayed in more than 100 movies throughout the first half of the 20th century.

As originally and consistently depicted, Holmes was a pipe-smoking, deep-thinking, clue-sniffing genius; a gentleman gumshoe who brought Victorian-era bad guys to justice without getting his hands dirty.

That was then. The new "Sherlock Holmes" movie retains story's original setting and time period, but updates the character with some rock-'em, sock-'em razzle-dazzle. Robert Downey Jr. plays Holmes as a brainy brawler, equally at home in the back-alley boxing ring or the drab lab that doubles as his disheveled apartment. He drinks too much, dabbles in noisy experiments that alarm – and even endanger – his neighbors, and has a contentiously co-dependent relationship with his crime-solving partner, the dignified physician John Watson (Jude Law).



COURTESY PHOTO

While the time period remains the same, the Holmes and Watson characters have been updated. Holmes, played by Robert Downey Jr., is more of a brawler with brains, and Dr. Watson is no longer the bumbling bafloon of the earlier movies.

The return of a feisty femme fatale from Holmes' past (Rachel McAdams) lights the fuse on the master sleuth's next adventure, involving a ploy to take over the world led by a dark arts master who apparently comes back from the dead to begin his reign of evil. But this would-be demonic dominator first has to deal with a certain pesky detective.

The plot races and roars through a deliciously grungy combination of real sets and computer-generated imagery

for all sorts of big-action scenes in and around turn-of-the-century London, including an epic, delightfully destructive melee that ends with Watson rescuing Holmes from being squashed by a runaway ship and a dazzling climax atop the under-construction London Bridge.

Savvy moviegoers will see the movie's numerous connections to other pop-cultural touchstones. The camaraderie between Holmes and Watson will remind you of "Butch Cassidy and the Sundance Kid." Holmes' deductive clue processing is depicted in jarring, quick-cut, "CSI"-style flashbacks of things he's seen, assimilated and filed away in his head. There's more than a trace of "Da Vinci Code" in the mysterious, secret-society cabal which fronts for their seemingly resurrected ringleader, and in Sherlock's urgent race to put together the pieces of the puzzle before it's too late.

Downy is a hoot as Holmes, and the whole movie barrels along with a sense of unstuffy, unbridled, PG-13 fun. There's really nothing here unsuitable for older kids, even the subtle double-entendre quip after a hotel chambermaid discovers Holmes naked and restrained to a bed. He tells her that underneath a strategically placed pillow in his lap is "the key to my release." Get your mind out of the gutter, old chap – he's talking about the key to his handcuffs.

When the ride is over, the stage is clearly set for a sequel. Bring it on. The durable character of Sherlock Holmes has solved countless crimes and rounded up a colorful rogue's gallery of lawbreakers over the past century. But the iconic detective's most impressive feat of all might be finding the secret to turning a musty, 100-year-old franchise into shiny new blockbuster gold.

Cinema 6
MOVIE TIMES 365-9633 Showtimes Effective 1/15/10 - 1/21/10

Avatar (PG13) Everyday: 1:30, 6:00, 9:00	Daybreakers (R) Everyday: 1:30, 4:00, 6:30, 9:00
The Book Of Eli (R) Everyday: 1:30, 4:00, 6:30, 9:00	The Spy Next Door (PG) Everyday: 1:30, 4:00, 6:30, 9:00

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15 MCAGCC-Palm Springs Friday

Palm Springs Airport	Indian Canyon & Andreas (Casino)	Indian Canyon & Tacheva (Hospital)	Stater Bros WallMart	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 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

*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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COURTESY PHOTO

The return of a femme fatale from Holmes' past, Rachel McAdams, lights the fuse on the master sleuth's adventure.

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Ultramarathoner stops at Combat Center during trans-America run

PVT. MICHAEL T. GAMS

COMBAT CORRESPONDENT

TWENTYNINE PALMS, Calif. – Five days after leaving Huntington Beach, Calif., 21-year-old ultramarathoner Patrick McGlade made a pit stop in the home of Combat Center officers Jan. 6-7 during his run across America to promote awareness and raise money for childhood rheumatoid arthritis.

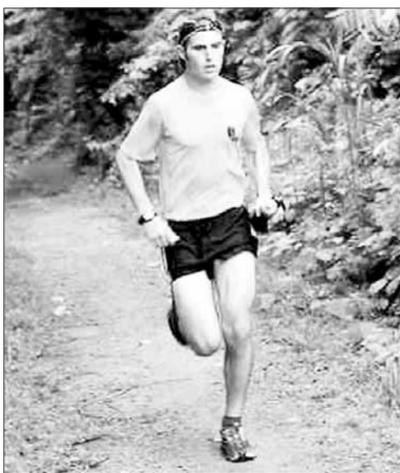
Col. Bill Mullen, the commanding officer of the Marine Corps Tactics and Operations Group here, hosted McGlade during his time in Twentynine Palms.

Mullen said he heard about McGlade's run through one of his sergeants major and wanted to help, so he contacted McGlade's father Desmond, a retired Marine, and offered a warm bed to the runner.

"For a man his age to have the 'stick-to-it-ness' to run across America is above the norm," Mullen said. "Once I heard what he was doing and why he was doing it, I volunteered to take him in. I admire what he's doing."

McGlade was also hosted by Lt. Col. Steven Beck, the operations officer for MCTOG, in Joshua Tree, Calif., Jan. 6 before he ran through Twentynine Palms, where Mullen picked him up eight miles past the town.

McGlade said he will spend four months running an average of a marathon a day, six days a week pushing a baby jogger loaded with clothes, peanut butter and jelly sandwiches, water, a tent and a sleeping bag.



COURTESY PHOTO

This undated family photo shows 21-year-old Patrick McGlade preparing for a trans-American run to benefit childhood rheumatoid arthritis.

His run will take him over 2,400 miles and he will run until he reaches Tybee Island, Ga., said Desmond in a Dec. 30 press release.

McGlade was slated to run past the intersection of Adobe Road and Highway 62 at 11:30 a.m. Mullen was waiting at the intersection to introduce himself. McGlade was ahead of schedule, however, and made a stop at a

local drive-through restaurant. He approached Mullen afterwards sporting a bright yellow shirt, a baseball cap backwards, large sunglasses and a smile on his face.

"I like running – actually, I really like running," said the Fredericksen, Va., native. "Once I heard about childhood arthritis, I wanted to do something to help – something more than just sending out flyers or pamphlets to people."

"I love the feeling of running and these kids may never get the opportunity," he said. "I want to do my part to help future generations."

His goal is to raise \$50,000 for the Arthritis Foundation by the end of the run, said Desmond.

McGlade trained a long time for this run, spending extra time in the gym, running back-to-back ultramarathons during weekends and running approximately 100 miles a week.

"This run has been awesome so far, I've met so many new people, gotten donations, and people seem to be really supportive," he said.

He said the kind of support he has received from families and people like Mullen has helped to keep him motivated on his run.

"If you had asked me two days ago, I would have told you I didn't think I could make it," said a confident McGlade. "Now, I have no doubt I'll make it, I've got my head right and I feel good about this run."

For updates and more information about McGlade's run please visit the Web site, <http://way.to/patrickrun4arthritis>.

Twentynine Palms Little League upcoming events

The Twentynine Palms Little League is currently conducting signups every Saturday at the Twentynine Palms Junior High and High Schools, and at the 4 Sports and More sporting goods outlet in town. Signups will also be conducted on each evaluation date. Please arrive at least 45 minutes before your child's posted evaluation time. We will accept late sign ups until teams have been filled. Evaluations will be held at Luckie Park on the following dates and times:

Feb. 21:
AA Baseball (Ages 6-8) and Major Girls Softball (Ages 9-12) at 1 p.m.
AAA Baseball (Ages 9-10) and Senior Girls Softball (Ages 13-16) at 2:30 p.m.
Major Baseball (Ages 11-12) and Junior Baseball (Ages 13-15) at 4 p.m.

Feb. 27:
AA Baseball and Major Girls Softball – 9 a.m. and 1:30 p.m.
AAA Baseball and Senior Girls Softball – 10:30 a.m. and 3 p.m.
Major Baseball and Junior Baseball at 12 and 4:30 p.m.

Feb. 28:
AA Baseball and Major Girls Softball at 1 p.m.
AAA Baseball and Senior Girls Softball at 2:30 p.m.
Major Baseball and Junior Baseball at 4 p.m.

All players who sign up for Little League will be placed on a team. Evaluations are used to help ensure that each team will have similar skill levels. All players ages six through 16 must attend at least one evaluation. T-ball players (Ages 4-5) do not attend evaluations. Please call Ray Gonzales at 799-4444 with any questions.

Athlete of the Week

Name: Tyler Moug
Hometown: Roseburg, Ore.

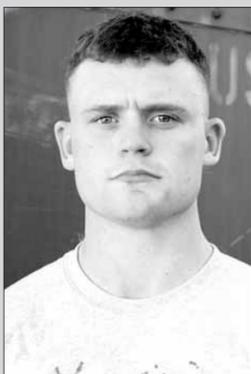
Unit: Headquarters Battalion

Job title: Police sergeant

Recognition: Two gold medals during Saturday's Grappling Experience Tournament in Las Vegas

Favorite aspect of the sport: "It seems so physical, but there is more mental focus required than people give the sport credit for."

Advice for aspiring athletes: "Stick with it. You'll reach your goals easier than you might think."



Active duty military to receive free admission to Bob Hope Classic

PRESS RELEASE

LA QUINTA, Calif. – The 51st Bob Hope Classic, to be played Jan. 18-24 in La Quinta, is extending free admission to all active duty military personnel and their families.

Service members must present valid military identification when they arrive at the SilverRock Resort admissions gate, to be issued a daily gallery pass.

"Bob Hope was such a strong supporter of our

armed services, we want to be sure any active military personnel can attend this historic event," said Bob Hope Classic president and chairman John Foster.

During his long career as one of America's greatest humorists, Hope entertained U.S. troops so often he was made an "Honorary Veteran," by a 1997 Act of Congress, signed by then-President Bill Clinton. Hope died in 2003 at age 100.

Baseball Hall of Famer Yogi Berra has been named

the first-ever "Classic Ambassador."

Defending champion Pat Perez, and past champions Mark Brooks, Chad Campbell, Joe Durant, Charley Hoffman, Justin Leonard and Mike Weir are among the other early pro entries for the 2010 Classic. Famed musician Kenny G, future baseball Hall of Fame pitcher Greg Maddux, and actor Kurt Russell are among the initial celebrities set to participate.

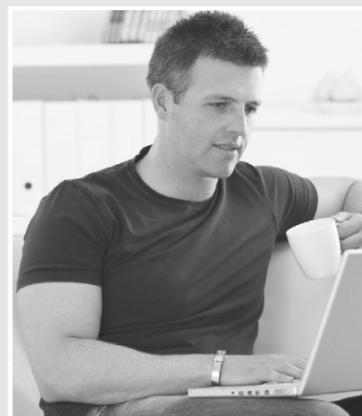
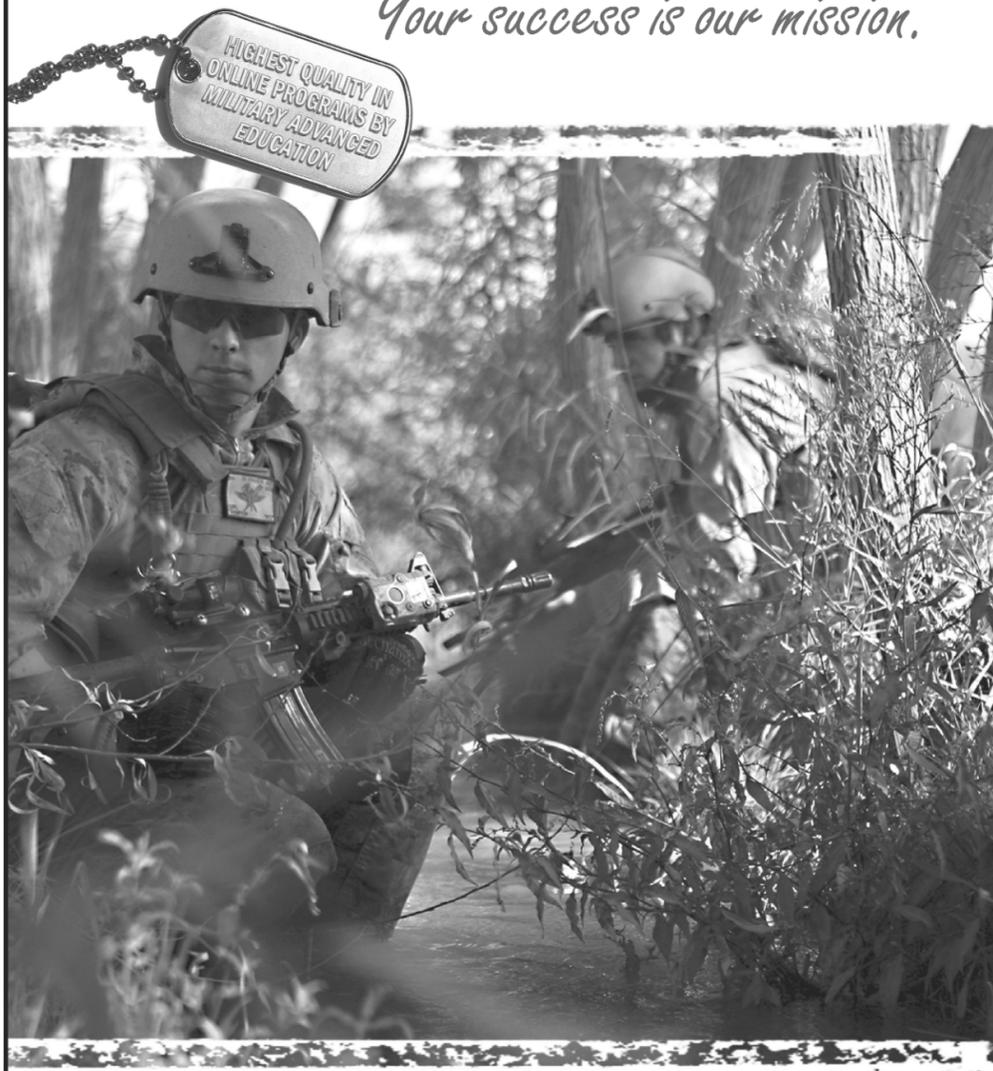
Practice rounds for the 2010 Classic at all four courses

will be conducted Monday, and Tuesday. Tournament play begins Wednesday and concludes Jan. 24. The five-day Classic features 128 top PGA Tour professionals and 384 amateur contestants. All five days of the Classic will be televised on the Golf Channel. The top prize is \$900,000.

In 50 years, the Classic has donated more than \$47 million to charities throughout the Coachella Valley. For more information, go to <http://www.bobhopeclassic.com> or call 888-672-4673.

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