

Mandatory suicide prevention training expanded to junior Marines

PFC. SEAN DENNISON
MARINE CORPS AIR STATION YUMA

MARINE CORPS AIR STATION YUMA, Ariz. – Junior enlisted Marines and sailors will now receive new suicide prevention training as part of their annual training requirements, effective immediately. According to Marine Administrative Message 022/11, released Jan. 10, the training is an expansion of noncommissioned officers’

“Never Leave a Marine Behind” suicide prevention program and must be completed by fiscal year 2011. All junior Marines and sailors are required to receive this documented training only once, though it can also double as their annual suicide prevention training. “Every Marine is at risk for suicide,” said Navy Lt. Cmdr. Andrew Martin, the Corps’ suicide prevention program manager. “We want every Marine to

be aware of the risk factors and warning signs of suicide.” The junior enlisted will participate in interactive group discussions for 90 minutes, led by a sergeant certified in suicide awareness. Previously, this suicide prevention training was required only for NCOs. According to Martin, a major change to the curriculum is the training video, “Never Leave a Marine Behind.” The movie was edited to present the

topic of suicide from a junior enlisted point of view, focusing more on interpersonal relationships and mutual trust between junior Marines and sailors rather than NCOs. “It’s okay to get help,” said Martin. “Getting help won’t end a career.” As well, the previous acronym, PRESS, which guided Marines on suicide awareness, “prevention, prepare, recognize, engage, send and sustain” will be replaced by

RACE, “recognize, ask, care and escort,” which emphasizes quicker recognition on the signs of suicide contemplation. According to Headquarters Marine Corps, the rate of suicide among civilians was higher than the Corps’ up until 2009. The suicide prevention program truly took off that year when a noticeable spike in suicides showed itself in the statistics. The number of suicides dropped from 52 in 2009 to 37 in 2010. However, the

number of suicide attempts has risen steadily since 2006, with 2010 seeing more than 160 attempts. “The big problem is in the junior ranks statistically,” said Sgt. Jordan Jones, station suicide prevention trainer. “They come into the Marine Corps at a young age and are less equipped to handle the stress factor than the more experienced Marines.” For more information, refer to MarAdmin 022/11.



LANCE CPL. ANDREW D. JOHNSTON

Marines with 2nd Battalion, 9th Marine Regiment and Afghanistan National Army soldiers debark CH-53E helicopter during Operation Integrity, in Marjah, Helmand Province, Afghanistan, Jan. 15. The main purpose of the operation was to successfully cordon off a suspected hotspot for Taliban activity, search for weapons and IED caches, disrupt enemy logistical operations and gather census data on locals in the region of Sistani.

Marines say insurgency weakening in northern Marjah

LANCE CPL. ANDREW JOHNSTON
REGIMENTAL COMBAT TEAM 1

MARJAH, Afghanistan – It was early morning and the moon still lit the sky. A frigid winter breeze lashed the Marines as they trudged across frost-covered farmland, quietly making their way to the landing zone. In the cover of darkness, they crouched in an empty canal and awaited their flight. As the first rays of sun began to peer over the tree-line, loudspeakers from nearby mosques sounded Muslim prayer verses across the countryside. As the Marines waited, the chopping sound of helicopter rotors grew gradually louder. The helicopters flew into position, scooped up the fighters and disappeared into the clouds. On Jan. 15, 2nd Battalion, 9th Marine Regiment, launched Operation Integrity, in Marjah, Helmand province, Afghanistan. The main purpose of the operation was to successfully cordon off a suspected hotspot for Taliban activity, search for weapons and IED caches, disrupt enemy logistical operations and

gather census data on locals in the region of Sistani. When the sun rose, locals stepped outside to discover their village surrounded by a massive convoy of armored vehicles. Helicopters flew in and inserted Marines and ANA soldiers in the surrounding farmland. With security set and unmanned aircraft monitoring from above, the Marines and ANA swept across the countryside, knocking on doors and searching compounds. “Our primary task is to disrupt Taliban activity by searching suspected bed-down locations and possible weapons caches,” said Capt. Ronald Diefenbach, commanding officer of Weapons Company, 2/9. “Even if no insurgents or weapons are captured, we’ll keep the enemy on his toes and have the opportunity to engage with the local population on a number of issues.” After searching several compounds and talking to locals, Diefenbach noticed a trend. Unlike previous ops he had been on, the majority of the locals had no problem informing on

the Taliban this time. Diefenbach found that most of the Taliban had left the area. Known hiding spots for Taliban contraband turned up empty. Hopefully, the Taliban are starting to leave for good, he said. Diefenbach suggested that locals have been more willing to cooperate after seeing the effectiveness of coalition operations, such as a recent one in northern Marjah that brought numerous Taliban fighters and commanders into custody. He said the positive feedback from the locals this time was probably due to increased security and stabilization of the region. “[The capture of Taliban leaders] genuinely increases people’s positive sentiment about [Afghanistan’s government] and their Marine partners,” said Diefenbach. “Their willingness to speak out has to do with the increase in security. If you’re not worried about someone threatening your family, you’re more likely to provide information and side

See MARJAH, A6

New exchange modernizes Wilson

CPL. M. C. NERL
COMBAT CORRESPONDENT

The Combat Center’s newest Marine Corps Exchange officially opened at Camp Wilson Jan. 14 to help deal with the large numbers of Marines needing supplies during their Enhanced Mojave Viper training. The new exchange offers Marines and sailors the convenience of a regular store or mini-mart and still maintains the same core brands at Corps values they are used to getting, said Master Sgt. Scott Ferguson, the retail operations chief for Marine Corps Community Services. “The new exchange is modeled closely to what Marines would see out in

town,” said Ferguson, a Denver native. “We’re doing more branding, focusing on name brands, carrying more familiar stuff and making it more convenient for the Marines to get what they need when they shop here.” Staff Sgt. Victor Bessee, the Camp Wilson exchange manager, gave insight to the advantages the new exchange has over the old one. “The customer service has improved a lot; it’s faster and more efficient,” he said. “We’ve adapted to handle a crowd of about 163 occupants, as opposed to our old one of 88. “The new [exchange] allows us to keep [the customers] moving,” he added.

See EMV, A4



CPL. M. C. NERL

Patrons roam the aisles of the Combat Center’s new Marine Corps Exchange at Camp Wilson Wednesday during its first week of operation. The exchange helps Marines get in and out faster and get on with their training with its new build.

BASIC program addresses alcohol abuse, prevention

CPL. ANDREW S. AVITT
COMBAT CORRESPONDENT

When a Saturday night cocktail turns into a early morning Monday beer, Marine Corps and Navy small unit leaders, usually noncommissioned officers, are the first to notice. In order to fight alcohol abuse all throughout the ranks and not just in the First Sergeant’s office, the Building Alcohol Skills Intervention Curriculum program was developed to give small unit leaders the skills and knowl-

edge to teach their Marines about responsibilities and good decision-making skills associated with alcohol. “NCOs need to step up to the plate and take the handle on this,” said Billy Smith, an alcohol abuse prevention specialist with the Combat Center’s Substance Abuse Counseling Center. The program teaches Marines and sailors how to assess their own drinking habits, as well as peers and subordinates, in an effort to spread accountability

throughout the ranks. Another goal of the BASIC program is to reduce the irresponsible use of alcohol, such as binge drinking and drinking and driving. Using a guided discussion format, Marines and sailors talk about responsible drinking habits that will help individuals make informed decisions about alcohol consumption. The course also aims to educate Marines on the various risk factors that increase the likelihood of abusing alcohol or developing alcoholism.

Some of these risk factors include family history of alcohol abuse, financial problems, boredom, low self-esteem, significant loss or a unit culture that encourages drinking. Contrary to popular belief, the program is not designed to make Marines abstain from drinking, but more to raise awareness of problems associated with it, said Smith. The Marine Corps’ objective is to combat the debilitating threat posed by alcohol abuse and alcohol dependency

on both Marines and mission readiness, according to the Marine Corps Community Services website at <http://usmc-mccs.org>, which offers a description of the Marine Corps alcohol abuse prevention program, a goal that Smith sees succeeding in slow but steady numbers. The number of driving under the influence charges has decreased by 27 incidents during the last three years, said Smith, who credits this change to consistent safety stand downs and the focus

and concern of commands. The Headquarters Marine Corps-mandated course for noncommissioned officers is scheduled frequently throughout the year. Units that are incomplete with the annual training can call the Substance Abuse Counseling Center and set up a date and time with Smith, he said. For more information on the BASIC program or any of the Corps’ other alcohol and substance abuse programs, visit <http://usmc-mccs.org/leader-guide/substanceuse/alcohol>.



Visit the official MCAGCC facebook page at <http://www.facebook.com/thecombatcenter>



Restoration work is scheduled for Combat Center petroglyphs. Visit the MCAGCC Facebook page at <http://www.facebook.com/thecombatcenter> to see more photos.

Sign, click, submit:

TRICARE enrollment process streamlined

MIKE WALBERT

TriWest Healthcare Alliance

Enrolling into the TRICARE West Region now has the feel and ease of signing a credit card transaction at the market or department store.

TriWest Healthcare Alliance, the Department of Defense contractor that manages TRICARE for the 21-state West Region, has rolled out electronic signature pads to nearly all of its TRICARE Service Centers at West Region offices, bringing convenience to customers.

How it works

Rather than flipping through pages of forms to sign, beneficiaries now can sign their enrollment, allotment and drive-time waiver forms on the electronic pad, click to submit, and it's done.

Once the signature is submitted, the documents are electronically transmitted to TriWest's enrollment department, where beneficiaries are entered into the system.

Other advantages include:

- If a record needs to be located, electronic forms can be found much faster than a paper form.
- Electronic signature process helps reduce the amount of paper used; however, West Region beneficiaries can still receive a print-out for their records.

"We're excited about this automated process because it's extremely easy for our beneficiaries to use," said TriWest President and CEO David J. McIntyre, Jr. "We recognize the enrollment process can sometimes be complicated. By streamlining it with electronic signatures, we're helping to make the entire process more convenient for our customers."

For more, follow TriWest on Facebook and Twitter: www.facebook.com/triwest and <http://twitter.com/triwest>.

Centerspeak

What is your dream car?

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



LANCE CPL. DANIEL GONZALEZ
3RD COMBAT ENGINEER BATTALION

"The '02 Ferrari F50, because it's a rare and sexy car."



PFC. PAUL DEKORTE
3RD BATTALION,
7TH MARINE REGIMENT

"The Bugatti Veyron, because there is no way I could ever afford it."



STAFF SGT. CHRISTOPHER MATTHEWS
2ND BATTALION,
7TH MARINE REGIMENT

"The 1969 GTO Judge. It is the epitome of an American muscle car."



SGT. JEREMY SMITH
1ST TANK BATTALION

"The Ferrari Enzo. It's a fast and luxurious car."

Hot Topics

DSTRESS LINE

From combat related stress to the everyday stressors of life, stress can affect even the strongest Marine. The DSTRESS Line was developed by the Corps to provide professional, anonymous counseling for Marines, their families and loved ones when it is needed most. Call 1-877-476-7734.

HEARTS APART DINNER

There will be a Hearts Apart Dinner Feb. 14 at the O'Club from 6-9 p.m. The Hearts Apart Dinner is a social event for all age 18 and over spouses of deployed service members. Tickets are \$7 per person at the door and \$5 advance purchase through ITT in building 1533. Reservations are required. For more information, call 830-5086.

CHILDREN, YOUTH, TEEN PROGRAMS

There is still space available for the Children, Youth and Teen Programs on the Combat Center. Programs are available for ages 6 weeks to 12 years. Call 830-3227 for more details.

Marine Corps History

Jan. 22, 1969

Operation Dewey Canyon, perhaps the most successful high-mobility regimental-size action of the Vietnam War, began in the A Shau/Da Krong Valleys when the 9th Marines, commanded by Col. Robert H. Barrow, and supporting artillery were lifted from Quang Tri. By March 18 the enemy's base area had been cleared out, 1617 enemy dead had been counted, and more than 500 tons of weapons and ammunition unearthed.



Eagle Eyes

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

"Ohh Yeah...., It's definitely MONDAY!"



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

SUDOKU #2061

1				2			3	
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	8			6				5

CROSSWORD AND SUDOKU PUZZLES COURTESY OF © 2010 HOMETOWN CONTENT

NATIONAL SHAKEUPS

[Puzzle solutions on A4]

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57					58		59	60						
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64					65					66				

ACROSS

1. "___ mia!"
6. Lamebrain
10. Marquis de ___
14. Computer of the '40s
15. Ark set
16. Thunder sound
17. South Pacific dance?
19. Chop house request
20. Iroquois Confederacy member
21. Word before fiction or fair
23. College web address suffix
25. Merkel of moviedom
26. European sitcom bus driver?
34. "Winner" in a 1948 headline
35. Paddy wagon sounder
36. "Rope-a-dope" boxer
37. Gung-ho
38. ___ excursion module
39. Touched down
40. Diarist Anais
41. Witchcraft trials town
42. Five-alarmer, e.g.
43. African symbols of royalty?
46. Memorable Burns role
47. ___ Tafari (Haile Selassie)
48. Performs sans rehearsal
52. "The Carpetbaggers" producer Joseph E.
57. Carrying no guarantees
58. Asian quiz-show regulars?
61. Gambling haven
62. Lou Grant's paper
63. Christmas tree topper
64. Hammer end
65. Change for a fin
66. Orbital periods

DOWN

1. "Take ___ your leader"
2. Bartlett's abbr.
3. Greedy one's exclamation
4. Christmas trio
5. Plebe's place
6. Masseur's milieu
7. Fleming or Paisley
8. Russian-built fighters
9. Acquirer, as of free passes
10. Sound from a Beatles concert goer
11. Greenspan, formerly of the Fed
12. Jeanne ___ (French saint)
13. Fencer's blade
18. Bit of vocal fanfare
22. ___ uproar
24. Andress of film
26. "The ___ made me do it!"
27. "Dallas" family name
28. Buntline or Rorem
29. '40s-'50s slugger Ralph
30. Seinfeld's neighbor
31. ___ Lama
32. "My Fair Lady" lady
33. TV's Nick at ___
34. Comical Carvey
38. Attacked
39. The whole schmear
41. Sellout shows, for short
42. Wage, excluding overtime
44. Incites
45. Brazen boldness
48. Get bent out of shape
49. "Understood!"
50. Half a golf course
51. Gull relative
53. Wind indicator
54. Swenson of "Benson"
55. ___-do-well
56. Conduit bends
59. Missile for Moe
60. Tummy muscles

Combat Center Spotlight

Name: Cpl. Robert J. Thompson
Hometown: Elmwood Park, N.J.
Job title: Accident Investigator
Unit: Provost Marshal's Office
Duties: Investigates accidents aboard the Combat Center.
Favorite part of the job: "Learning new things every day while out in the field."
Significant achievement: Chosen for a personal security detail for Commandant of the Marine Corps Gen. James F. Amos.
Hobbies: Riding all-terrain vehicles and dirt bikes.
Years of service: Three years.
Service on the Combat Center: Two years.



OBSERVATION POST

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LANCE CPL. SARAH ANDERSON

Marines from 3rd Battalion, 4th Marine Regiment, train in the Combat Convoy Simulator Dec. 8 at the Battle Simulation Center on Camp Wilson.

CCS preps Marines for combat

LANCE CPL. SARAH ANDERSON
COMBAT CORRESPONDENT

The Combat Center Battle Simulation Center at Camp Wilson created a way for Marines to experience the chaos of combat while training at home. This device is called the Combat Convoy Simulator. Six rooms make up the CCS, each containing mock Humvee or 7-ton

vehicles. The rooms provide a computerized 360-degree view. In each room, Marines can see and work together with their comrades in separate rooms as they virtually form a convoy. The system simulates convoy operations in combat environments. In the command room, the instructors create a variety of scenarios. “We can create or recreate any scenario we

want,” said Gunnery Sgt. Hector Viramontes, a combat tactics instructor at the Battle Simulation Center. “We have had units who experienced a scenario in combat ask us to replay it to test the Marines’ reactions again.” In the simulator, computerized improvised explosive devices, insurgents, buildings and even innocent

See CCS, A8

SJA CORNER

Creditors cannot contact commands

CAPT. DAVID SEGRAVES
LEGAL ASSISTANCE OFFICE

With a few exceptions, a Marine’s creditors are violating California and possibly federal law when they contact a Marine’s chain of command. Marines and their commands need to present a unified front to repel this inappropriate contact. Knowing the rights of Marines will save time for commands and relieve the anxiety of Marines whose creditors threaten the Marines’ careers. First, make no mistake, Marines need to keep their honor clean and pay their debts. Nothing in this article suggests otherwise. However, Marines need to assert their rights when creditors violate the law and commands need to assist Marines in asserting their rights. Per the Fair Debt Collection Practices Act (15 USC 1692), debt collectors cannot contact debtors at their place of business if they know or have reason to know the employer prohibits the consumer from receiving such communication. California law under its Fair Debt Collection Practices law (Cal.

Civ. Code 1788) expands debt collectors to include anyone who collects debts on behalf of himself or herself. The Marine Corps recognizes these issues in paragraph 16002(3) of the LEGAD-MINMAN, which states “Processing of complaints of indebtedness will not be extended to those creditors who are in violation of State law.” It goes further to say “Commanders may advise creditors that this policy has been established.” Exceptions do exist for these prohibitions. Creditors may contact an employer (1) if the debtor has consented in writing to the communication, (2) for the purpose of effecting wage garnishment after a court judgment, (3) for discovering medical insurance if the debt is a medical debt or (4) verifying the debtor’s employment. Knowing these exceptions, Marines should be wary of signing any documents that consent to possible future creditors contacting their employers.

If creditors do contact commands, as stated above, the command should notify the creditor on the prohibition for contacting them and make a log of the call. When a violation has occurred, the Marine should send a letter via certified mail notifying the creditor of the violation and that further violations of the California Fair Debt Collection Practices law subject the creditor to a lawsuit for actual damages (if the interaction adversely affects the Marine’s career) and penalties of between \$100 to \$1,000 per violation (Cal Civ. Code 1788.30). In a suit for these violations, Marines may collect their costs including attorney’s fees if the creditor acted in bad faith. Like many consumer protection laws, the Federal and California versions of the Fair Debt Collection Practices provide many rights, including many not addressed in this article. But consumers must first know their rights and exercise them to receive the benefit of these laws.

California DMV announces new 2011 laws

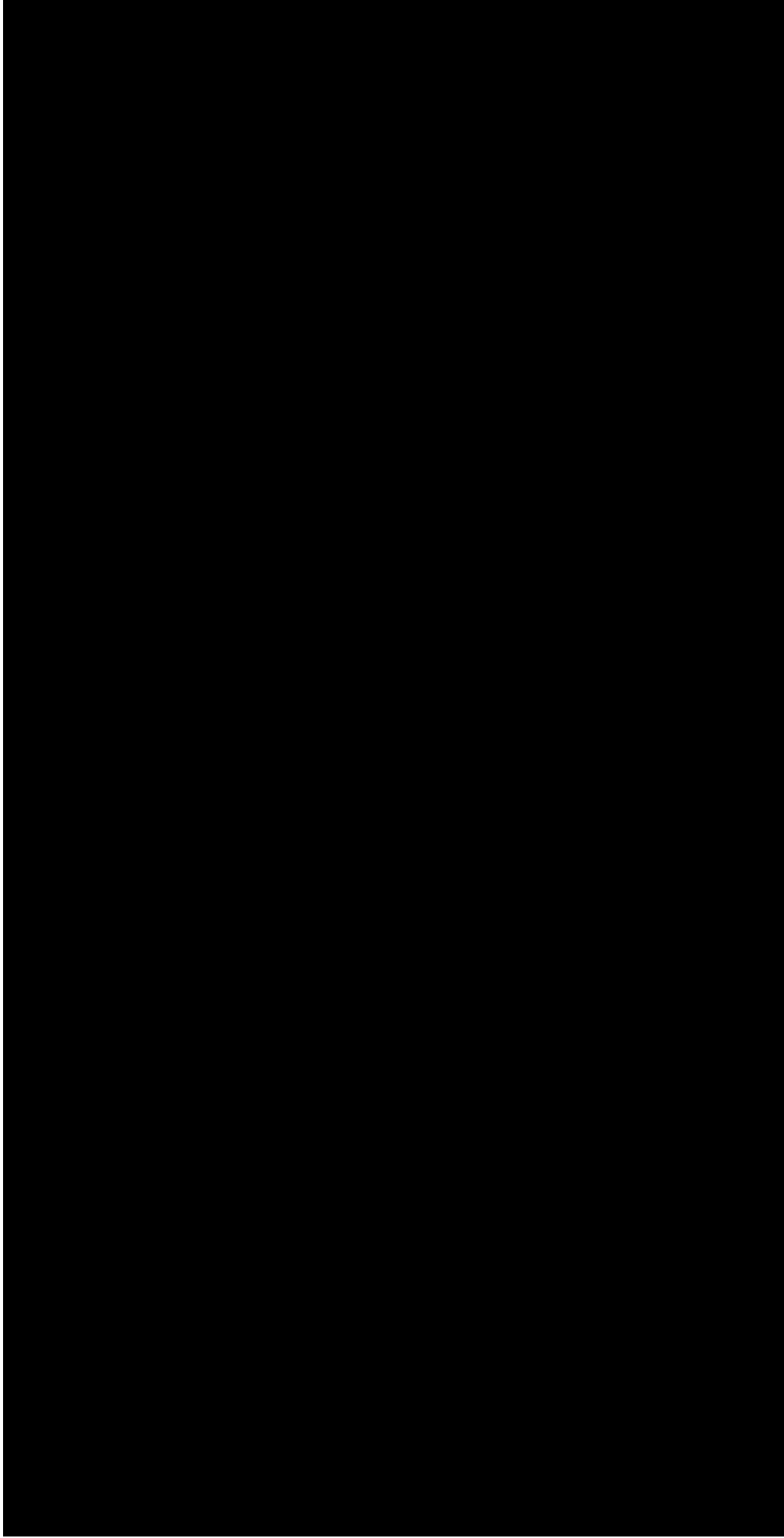
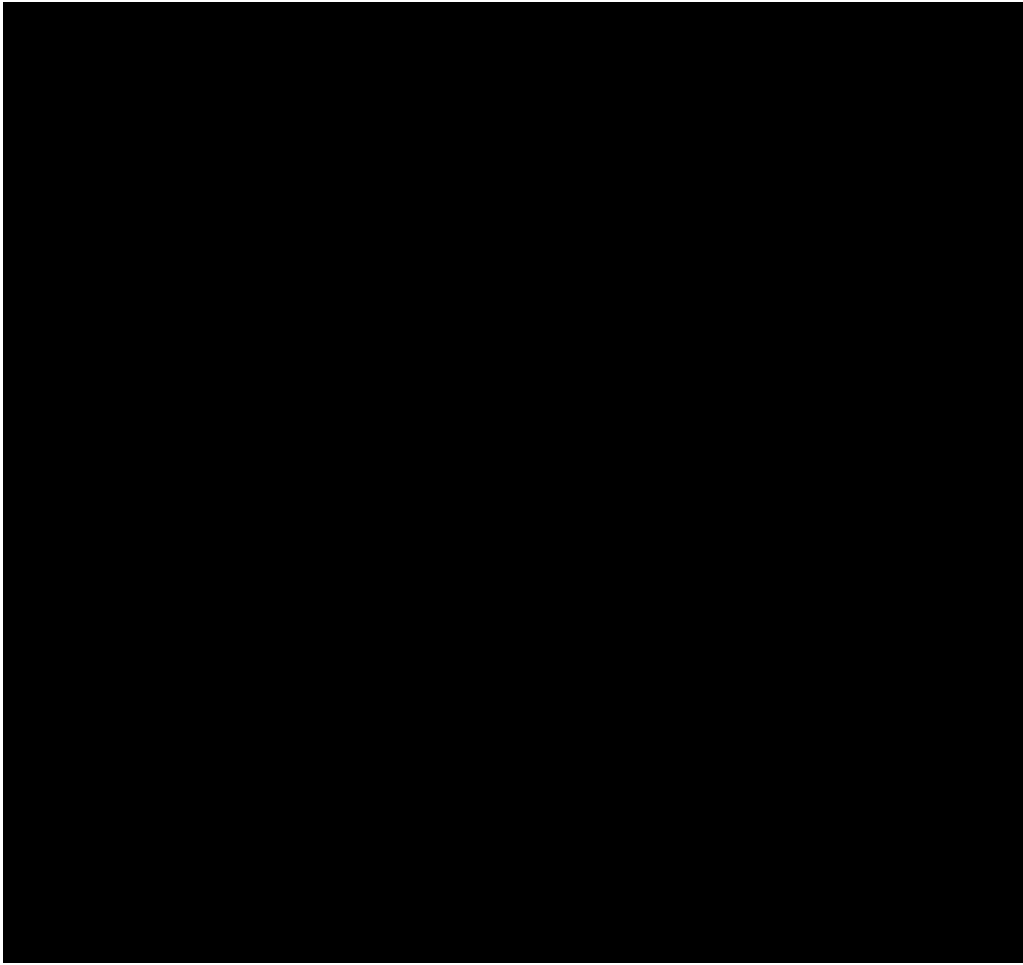
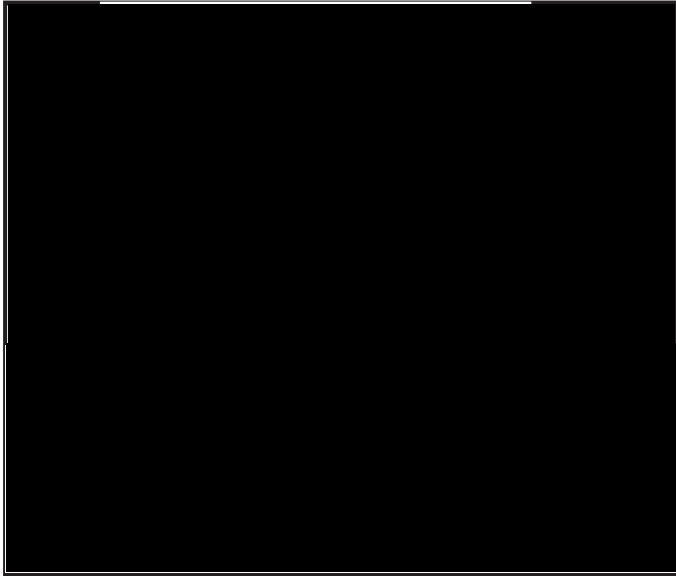
PRESS RELEASE
CALIFORNIA DEPARTMENT OF MOTOR VEHICLES

SACRAMENTO – A required motorcycle safety course for under-21 motorcycle permit applicants, new oversight of online traffic violator schools and extensions of high occupancy vehicle lane stickers are among several new laws of interest to California motorists that took effect Jan. 2, 2011, according to the Department of Motor Vehicles. Following are capsule summaries of the new laws: Motorcycle Instruction Permit (AB 1952/Niello). This new law requires a person under 21 years of age to complete an approved motorcycle safety course before being issued an instruction permit with which to practice operating a motorcycle and requires the permit to be held for six months before being issued a Class M motorcycle driver license. There are currently more than 6,000 drivers 19 years and younger who are licensed to ride a motorcycle in California. **Traffic Violator School Program (AB 2499/ Portantino)** Prior to this new law which started January 1, the DMV only licensed and regulated “brick and mortar” classroom traffic violator schools. This new law will bring court-approved courses, such as online and home study traffic schools, into the DMV Traffic Violator School licensing program

and implements a number of recommendations included in a DMV study of traffic violator school issues. This law will have a three-year implementation process. **High-Occupancy Vehicle Lanes (SB 535/Yee)** Prior law that permitted certain fuel-efficient, low-emission vehicles to display stickers allowing them to be operated in HOV lanes with a single occupant was to expire on Jan. 1. The new law extends the “sunset” date for the yellow stickers for hybrid vehicles until July 1; the white stickers issued to fully-electric and compressed natural gas vehicles until Jan. 1, 2015; and creates a third sticker, for plug-in hybrid vehicles, valid from Jan. 1, 2012 until Jan. 1, 2015. **New Firefighter Endorsement (AB 1648/ Jeffries)** In an effort to simplify the proper licensing of firefighters while continuing to

ensure public safety, this law exempts operators of fire-fighting vehicles from the Commercial Driver License program and creates a new license endorsement process. **New laws starting on July 1 and Beyond** • Organ Donation (SB 1395/Alquist) Starting July 1, the language on the DMV’s application offers the driver license applicant the option to register as a prospective organ donor in the organ donor program or to defer that decision to a later time. This change will now include in the organ donor registration field of the application check boxes indicating “(A) Yes, add my name to the donor registry,” or “(B) I do not wish to register at this time,” thus ensuring that the applicant’s failure to check the box is not simply an oversight. • Local Traffic Ordinances (SB 949/Oropeza) On July 1, in an effort to ensure that traffic convictions are

recorded by the Department of Motor Vehicles, local authorities may not enact or enforce a local ordinance on any matter covered by the California Vehicle Code. • Driving Under the Influence (AB 1601/Hill) Effective in Jan. 1, 2012, this bill authorizes a court to order a 10-year revocation of the driver license of a person convicted of a third or subsequent DUI violation, with possible reinstatement after five years if specified conditions are met.



New roads to bring better life to Afghan people

LANCE CPL. GLEN SANTY
REGIMENTAL COMBAT TEAM 2

FORWARD OPERATING BASE CAFFARETTA, Afghanistan – Marines on patrol use little more than rocks and dirt to draw the plans for an upcoming project. As far as the eye can see, rough roads stretch across the desert valley. Soon, roads here will be paved and goods will pour into the villages of Now Zad.

The Marines with the civil affairs team in support of 1st Battalion, 8th Marine Regiment, Regimental Combat Team 2, began the week making plans with local civilian contractors for the construction of the new roads.

Often, communicating those plans is the most difficult part.

“We had to go out and decide on where the major intersections were going to be, because at the moment

all they have are dirt paths,” said Navy Cmdr. Martin Sepulveda, a civil affairs team specialist in support of 1st Bn., 8th Marines, RCT-2. “Sometimes, so you know they understand, you have to just draw in the dirt.”

Paving roads will make the import of goods in and out of Now Zad easier and more frequent. The road construction will also create jobs for the local men, who are going to begin the road surfacing at the end of the month.

“We want projects that employ a lot of people and we also want something to show for the money we’re putting into it,” said Sepulveda.

Road construction doesn’t only help with the importing and exporting of goods, it also shows the progress of the area. Paving the roads makes the connection between Now Zad and the rest of Afghanistan easier for both locals and Afghan

National Security Forces too.

“These roads don’t just help the local villagers, they improve the quality of life for everyone,” said Lance Cpl. Bowen Yu, a civil affairs team specialist in support of 1st Bn., 8th Marines, RCT-2.

Paving roads here will cut the risk from traveling in and out of Now Zad. By building the roads out of concrete instead of dirt, the placement of improvised explosive devices by the enemy will be difficult.

Although the workers will use little more than picks and shovels to level the roads and fill the holes along the way, they are laying the foundation of the future success of Now Zad.

“I think that the roads will give the locals here a sense of place and sense of purpose,” Sepulveda said. “I think that at the end of the day it really signifies [to others] that you’re in Now Zad.”



LANCE CPL. GLEN SANTY

Cmdr. Martin Sepulveda, a civil affairs team specialist in support of 1st Battalion, 8th Marine Regiment, Regimental Combat Team 2, points out concerns on an upcoming road construction project in Now Zad, Jan. 14. The construction project will begin within the next 30 days.

Nominations open for 2011 military child of the year award

PRESS RELEASE
OPERATION HOMEFRONT

Operation Homefront announced the expansion of the 2011 Military Child of the Year Award and opened the nomination period. Beginning this year, the award will be given to an outstanding military child from each service – Army, Navy, Air Force, Marine Corps and Coast Guard. Winners, who each will receive \$5,000, will be flown with a parent or guardian to Washington, D.C., for a special recognition ceremony April 7. Nominations are being

accepted until Jan. 31.

Ideal candidates for the Military Child of the Year Award demonstrate resilience strength of character and thrive in the face of the challenges of military life. They demonstrate leadership within their families and within their communities.

“The sons and daughters of America’s service members learn what patriotism is at a very young age,” said Jim Knotts, chief executive officer, Operation Homefront. “Children in military families understand sacrifice and live with the concept of service. This is what the Military

Child of the Year Award honors.”

Nominees must:

- Must have valid military ID or currently be enrolled in DEERS
- Must be between ages 8 and 18
- Must be able to travel to Washington, D.C., for the ceremony April 7.

Finalists must have a background check to confirm legitimacy of information provided in the nomination and must provide references.

For more information or to nominate a child, visit <http://www.operationhomefront.net>.

EMV, from A1

“They can get what they want and then go perform their mission better.”

Bessee added in addition to expanded occupancy, the floorspace grew from approximately 7,000 square feet to around 11,000. Larger areas for staff and receiving of products were also added, easing the flow from trucks to consumers.

The bare necessities remain one of the major selling points in the exchange, he said. Comfort items such as towels, baby wipes, anything for hygiene and especially beef jerky are hot commodities.

Some veterans of EMV, such as Cpl. Rob Miller, a rifleman with Company G, 2nd Battalion, 2nd Marine Regiment, based out of Marine Corps Base Camp Lejeune, N.C., said the new exchange is a welcome sight in Camp Wilson.

“Sorry to say it, but Twentynine Palms is a pretty brutal place to be, especially during training,” said the Wilmington, S.C., native. “Having a nice exchange is good for morale, you could say. The stuff they offer here is great, and who’s going to complain about a building at Camp Wilson with [air conditioning]?”



CPL. M. C. NERL

Billy McClay, with McClay Distributors, checks inventory at the Combat Center’s new Marine Corps Exchange in Camp Wilson Wednesday. The new exchange expanded upon the old one from 7,000 square feet to approximately 11,000.

SUDOKU								
1	6	8	7	2	4	5	3	9
2	9	4	1	3	5	8	6	7
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7	4	3	5	9	8	2	1	6
6	2	9	3	1	7	4	5	8
9	5	1	8	7	3	6	2	4
3	7	6	4	5	2	9	8	1
4	8	2	9	6	1	3	7	5

CROSSWORD SOLUTIONS											
M	A	M	M	A	S	I	M	P	S	A	D
E	N	I	A	C	P	A	I	R	C	L	A
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Combat Center petroglyphs to be restored

LANCE CPL.
SARAH ANDERSON
COMBAT CORRESPONDENT

One of the Combat Center's treasured historical sites is under restoration by the Natural Resources and Environmental Affairs Office.

The Native American tribes who inhabited the land the Combat Center occupies today, left evidence behind, such as artifacts and rock art, also known as petroglyphs.

This rock art can be found in multiple areas aboard the Combat Center, but the Foxtrot site, which contains the most petroglyphs, is listed on the National Register of Historical Places and is protected from destruction or development.

The site's nearly 2,000 petroglyphs are estimated to date back as far as 10,000 to 12,000 years and can be found within 63 panels on 50 rocks.

The area's Native Americans that assumed responsibility for the majority of the rock art are the Serrano, Chemehuevi, Cahuilla and Mohave tribes, all highly mobile groups of people.

The installation's NREA recognized the value the mysterious rock art holds for the history of the region. The area is now restricted to prevent vandalism, and the NREA has begun projects to restore the historic site.

In the past, workers would paint over defacements in the rock to hide modern markings, said Dr. Marie Cottrell, the natural and cultural resources officer at the NREA.

As time passed, the paint oxidized and faded in color. Fortunately, technology improved, and new paint was developed that lasts longer and protects the rock, said Claire Dean, a conservator with Dean and Associates Conservation



LANCE CPL. SARAH ANDERSON

Petroglyphs found aboard the Combat Center are estimated to be as old as 10,000 to 12,000 years. The Foxtrot site is the largest petroglyph site aboard the installation which holds nearly 2,000 images.

Services. In order to apply the new coat of paint, the old paint needs to be removed, which could damage the rock if not done correctly, Dean said.

"We now use laser technology to remove the paint," she said. "It is like a laser paint chisel, except its not physically scraping off the paint, it is ablating [vaporizing] the paint."

The laser technology was originally used for industrial cleaning, but conservators adopted the idea for dealing with delicate and historical surfaces such as the Foxtrot site.

"It works with the same principle as removing a tattoo, except it is a more delicate and complicated process," Dean said.

With a mission to protect the area's natural environment, the NREA is constantly studying ways to conserve the rocks not only from passing visitors, but also from the harsh desert weather.

According to archeologists, the biggest threat to the petroglyphs is vandalism. The NREA encourages passers-by to enjoy the history and

culture of the Combat Center's 1,895 historical sites and 11 petroglyphs sites, but not to touch them.

Anyone interested in

learning about the archeological finds aboard the installation can call the Archeology and Paleontology Curation Center at 830-1196.



LANCE CPL. SARAH ANDERSON

One of the 2,000 images depicted at the Foxtrot petroglyph site aboard the Combat Center.

Storage tips for your motorcycle

BOBBY J. PIIRAINEN
*TRAFFIC SAFETY/MOTORCYCLE
PROGRAM MANAGER*

Whether you are storing your motorcycle for the winter or a deployment, here are some useful tips to help ensure that your motorcycle will withstand the elements and be ready to ride in the spring or upon your return.

1. Change your engine oil and oil filter

Old oil can trap contaminants, acids and unburnt fuels which can all become harmful to your engine. Also, it will be one less thing to do when you're ready to ride again.

2. Fuel

Put in an appropriate amount of name-brand fuel stabilizer (based on the amount of fuel left in the tank). Make sure to run the engine long enough so that treated fuel works its way down through the carburetors or fuel injectors.

3. Engine

Remove the spark plugs and place no more than a tablespoon of oil into each engine cylinder. Then turn the engine over a few times with the starter to distribute the oil. Once completed, install a new set of spark plugs.

4. Tires

Check out your tires thoroughly. Is there any cracking, weather aging, or other damage? If they are good, inflate them to the manufacturer's suggested maximum pressure. This helps keep them rounded out to minimize any flat spots. Ensure that your bike is properly secured so it doesn't fall over while in storage.

5. Chain, belt, and shaft drive preparation

Chain Drive – Check your chain to ensure that it's not stretched, kinked, or rusted. Also inspect the condition of

the sprockets to verify the teeth aren't bent or thin (pointed). If so, replace with the appropriate size. Once completed, clean, lube, and adjust the chain to the manufacturer's requirements.

Belt Drive – Inspect the belt to make sure that it's not frayed or shows signs of wear. If so, then it's time to replace it.

Shaft Drive – Check the seals to ensure they are not leaking.

6. Battery

Storage for your battery is simple; pull it out of the bike and, if possible, check and correct the electrolyte levels as needed. Hook it up to a trickle charger that will supply the correct amps to the battery throughout the storage season. For long-term battery storage, do not use a constant charging system as they will overcharge (overheat) and cause damage to the battery. Place the battery and charger in a ventilated area to avoid any build-up of fumes or gasses.

7. Cover it up

Last, but definitely not least, to protect your bike from the elements use a model/style-specific cover. Leaving a motorcycle outdoors and unprotected will likely cause rust, rubber cracking, and oxidation. Before putting on that cover, spray your bike's exhaust liberally with a protective coating such as WD-40. This will displace any condensation. Then put a cover on the end of the exhaust tip, such as a plastic bag, to help keep moisture and small creatures out.

These tips will help keep your bike healthy over your storage season. Although you've gone to great lengths to care for your motorcycle over the winter, perform a thorough TCLOCS pre-ride check before operating

MCTOG, joint partners prep Marine Regimental Combat Team for Afghanistan

CASEY E. BAIN
U.S. JOINT FORCES COMMAND

CAMP LEJEUNE, N.C. – U.S. Joint Forces Command's joint fires experts joined Marine Corps Tactics and Operations Group and other joint enablers here during a mission rehearsal exercise to prepare Marine Corps Regimental Combat Team 8 for its upcoming deployment to Afghanistan.

Exercise Spartan Resolve, led by MCTOG with support from USJFCOM's Joint Fires Integration and Interoperability Team and the Air Force's 505th Operations Squadron's Joint Integration Team, included academic instruction, a command post exercise and a live fire event.

"The training exercise focused on integrating joint, coalition and interagency partners in a live, virtual and constructive environment replicating conditions commanders and staffs will experience once deployed," said Lt. Col. James Szepesy, MCTOG's aviation integration lead at the Combat Center "The JFIIT, 505th and MCTOG team provided the training audience with a combat-like experience that will pay important dividends to the entire unit."

The 505th Operations Squadron's JIT, from Nellis Air Force Base, Nev., provided MCTOG with a fully functional Theater Battle Management Core System replicating the capabilities Marines will have when deployed to Afghanistan.

"Our air tasking order technicians ensured Marine ground forces are familiar with the complex computer systems that will help them to properly request Air Force airborne intelligence, surveillance and reconnaissance assets," said Air Force Lt.

Col. Denny Lewis, 505th Operations Squadron, JIT. "This capability will also enable the Marines to monitor the real-time execution of these assets in support of their ground mission."

The Air Force unit's headquarters, the 505th Command and Control Wing at Hurlburt Field, Fla., provides a multitude of joint and coalition command and control training opportunities. This training helps Marines and soldiers understand how to request and use airpower in real-world situations.

The JIT also provided remotely piloted aircraft mission intelligence coordinators to help train the RCT-8 staff on important tactics, techniques, and procedures for employing RPAs like the MQ-1 Predator and MQ-9 Reaper.

"Our goal is to ensure the regimental staff understands the capabilities and limitations of assets like the Predator and Reaper that will be at their disposal while they're in Afghanistan," said Lisa Jalbert, 505th Operations Squadron, JIT. "These important assets will provide the overwatch and extra set of eyes for the ground commander while they conduct their combat mission."

Part of JFIIT's mission during this exercise was to enhance the RCT-8 staff's ability to employ and integrate joint fires assets similar to what they will have in theater.

"Our primary purpose was to help MCTOG provide a joint experience for the training audience that replicates current theater operations and improve the unit's ability to leverage its joint fires capabilities," said Craig Berryman, JFIIT senior analyst. "This was the deploying unit's best opportunity to receive this type of mission-essential training before

they're in combat."

According to JFIIT leadership, supporting Spartan Resolve and MCTOG is an important part of the organization's mission to improve the integration and interoperability of joint fires at the tactical level.

"MCTOG does an excellent job of integrating joint assets to replicate a near-real-world environment," said Army Lt. Col. Alfonso Plummer, JFIIT's exercise lead. "Our mission was to help integrate joint fire enablers to improve the unit's targeting process, and reinforce vital [Techniques, Tactics and Procedures] that will shorten the unit's learning curve once in country as well as enhance their combat effectiveness and ultimately save lives."

"This kind of pre-deployment training is an absolute necessity for any unit that expects to fight and win on today's battlefield," Plummer continued. "The operational environment today demands warfighters fully understand and employ crucial joint capabilities that couldn't have been imagined a few short years ago. Spartan Resolve is an excellent example of providing that mission-like experience to our leaders and staffs that prepares them for success downrange."

According to exercise par-



DOD PHOTO BY CASEY E. BAIN

Marines prepare for their upcoming deployment to Afghanistan during exercise, Spartan Resolve at Camp Lejeune, N.C.

ticipants, MCTOG's using TBMCS provided them with an important opportunity to learn how to leverage a system that's available to units in Afghanistan.

"The ability to train with systems like TBMCS is an important part of what we need before we deploy," said Army Lt. Col. Dean Hagadorn, air future operations planner, II Marine Expeditionary Force (Forward). "This is the system we will be using in theater to get our aviation requirements on the air tasking order and we can't afford to wait until we're

deployed to figure it out."

"This has been excellent training and allowed all of us, regardless of the uniform we're wearing, to work with this system and learn how we can use it properly so we can more effectively accomplish our mission," said Maj. Mike Swingler, air officer, 2nd Marine Logistics Group. "It's a critical part of the foundation we need before we deploy."

The importance of this exercise to the deploying unit was very clear.

"Spartan Resolve allowed

us to hone our staff processes with important joint partners and other enablers to ensure we're prepared to provide coherent and comprehensive command and control throughout our battlespace," said Maj. James Ryans, RCT-8's operations officer. "We will be better prepared for our deployment and be able to maximize the use of all the available assets in theater because of this training."

According to Szepesy,

See MCTOG, A8



LANCE CPL. ANDREW D. JOHNSTON

Marines with 2nd Battalion, 9th Marine Regiment and Afghanistan National Army soldiers look out the back of a CH-53E helicopter as it takes them to their insert positions during Operation Integrity in Marjah, Helmand Province, Afghanistan, Jan. 15.

MARJAH, from A1

with the government."

As the operation continued, the ANA took the lead.

"[ANA] were the ones conducting the searches," Diefenbach said. "They were the ones dealing with the locals primarily and getting a feel for the local populace, since they are the future of Afghan security."

"The abilities of our ANA partners are increasing every day, so one of the goals of this operation was to get the ANA out there and have them execute the mission with little help from the Marines," said Capt. Jason M. Quinn, officer-in-charge of Operation

Integrity with 2/9.

Cpl. Nicholas Kovarik, an intelligence analyst with 2/9, said the partnership between 2/9 and ANA managed to search more than 200 compounds and gather census information on nearly 300 individuals.

In an area that was once ravaged by daily firefights, officials said the lack of Taliban presence during this operation could be another indication of the weakening insurgency in the region.

"Overall, from start to finish, everything was a success," Quinn said. "We managed to collect a lot of census data and a lot of intelligence that is going to help us and [other units] in the future."

Combat Center Religious Services

Sunday Immaculate Heart of Mary Chapel Roman Catholic Services 8:45 a.m. - Confessions+ 9 a.m. - Rosary 9:30 a.m. - Catholic Mass* 9:30 a.m. - Children's Liturgy of the Word 4 p.m. - Choir Practice 4:15 p.m. - Confessions+ 4:30 p.m. - Rosary 5 p.m. - Catholic Mass Christ Chapel 9 a.m. - Calvary Fellowship (Contemporary Worship*) 9 a.m. - Children's Church 10:30 a.m. - Redemption (A blend of traditional and contemporary worship 10:45 a.m. - Children's Church*)	Weekday Events Immaculate Heart of Mary Monday - Friday, 11:45 a.m. - Catholic Mass Christ Chapel Monday - Friday, noon - Daily Prayer Tuesday Christ Chapel 9 a.m. - Christian Women's Fellowship* (September through May) Immaculate Heart of Mary 3:30-5:30 p.m. - Military Council of Catholic Women Wednesday Immaculate Heart of Mary First Wednesday, 6 p.m. - Baptism preparation class First Wednesday, 7 p.m. - Knights of Columbus	Thursday Immaculate Heart of Mary 9 a.m. - Adult Class 6 p.m. - Children RCIA 6:30 p.m. - RCIA (September-April) 7 p.m. - Gr. 7 and Confirmation Friday Immaculate Heart of Mary First Friday each month, 12:15 p.m., 4:30 p.m. - Exposition/Adoration Most Blessed Sacrament Legend * Indicates child care is provided + Appointments can be made for confessions by calling 830-6456/6482
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Muslim prayer space is available in the Village Center, room 87.
Jewish prayer space is available in the Village Center, room 93.
For more information call 830-5430.

Combat Center Trader Ads

AUTOMOTIVE 2005 NISSAN ARMADA. White, 66,000 miles. Call for details. 362-5293. 2008 TOYOTA YARIS. \$10,000 OBO. Approximately 46K miles. Good condition. Consistent maintenance. Call 622-4562. 2000 NISSAN XTERRA. 4x4, auto, PDL, PW, roof rack, tow pkg., newer timing belt, 31" BFG's, 132K miles, \$5,000. Call 957-5630.	MISC. BUNK BED. Double/twin. Upgraded mattresses. Pooh Bear bedding included. Like new. \$225. Call 413-4015. GIBSON LES PAUL ELECTRIC. 1995 hard shell case. Excellent condition. \$1,500. Call 413-4015. BICYCLE, BABY ITEMS: Schwinn Stingray bike, solid wood baby crib, baby walker, stroller, wooden horse and more. All in excellent condition. Call 217-3310.	MISC. ITEMS. Ball gowns, navy blue size 9-10, navy blue size 6 \$50 each. Golf set \$20. Baby swing, baby stroller \$40 each. Call 361-3509. COLLECTIBLE SPORTS, SCI-FI CARDS: Baseball, football from mid 80's to 90's. Star Trek and Star Wars collectible cards too. Individual heroes, team sets or the whole collection. Call Stephen at 567-7921.
YOUR AD HERE		

The deadline for submitting Trader Ads is noon Wednesday, for the upcoming Friday's newspaper.

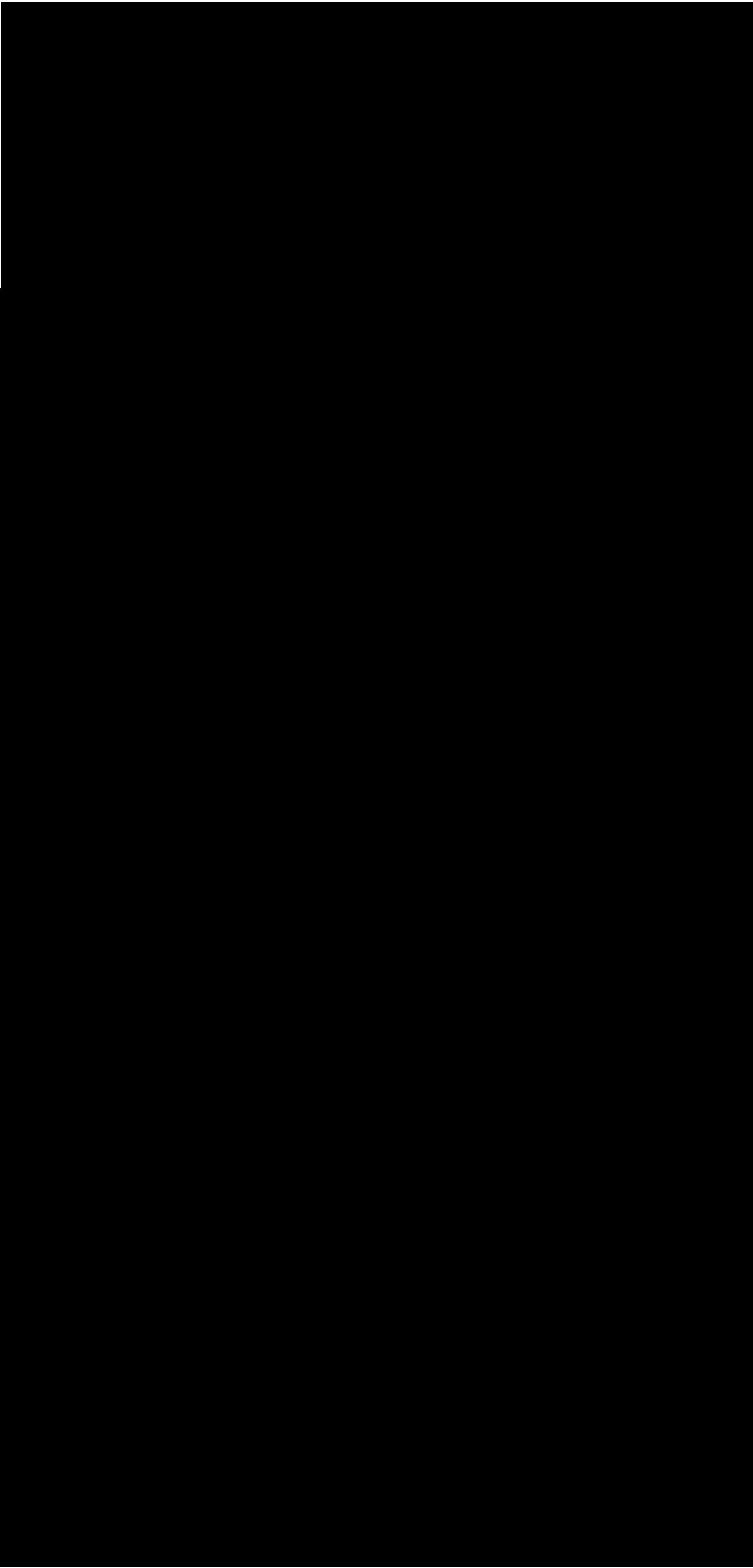
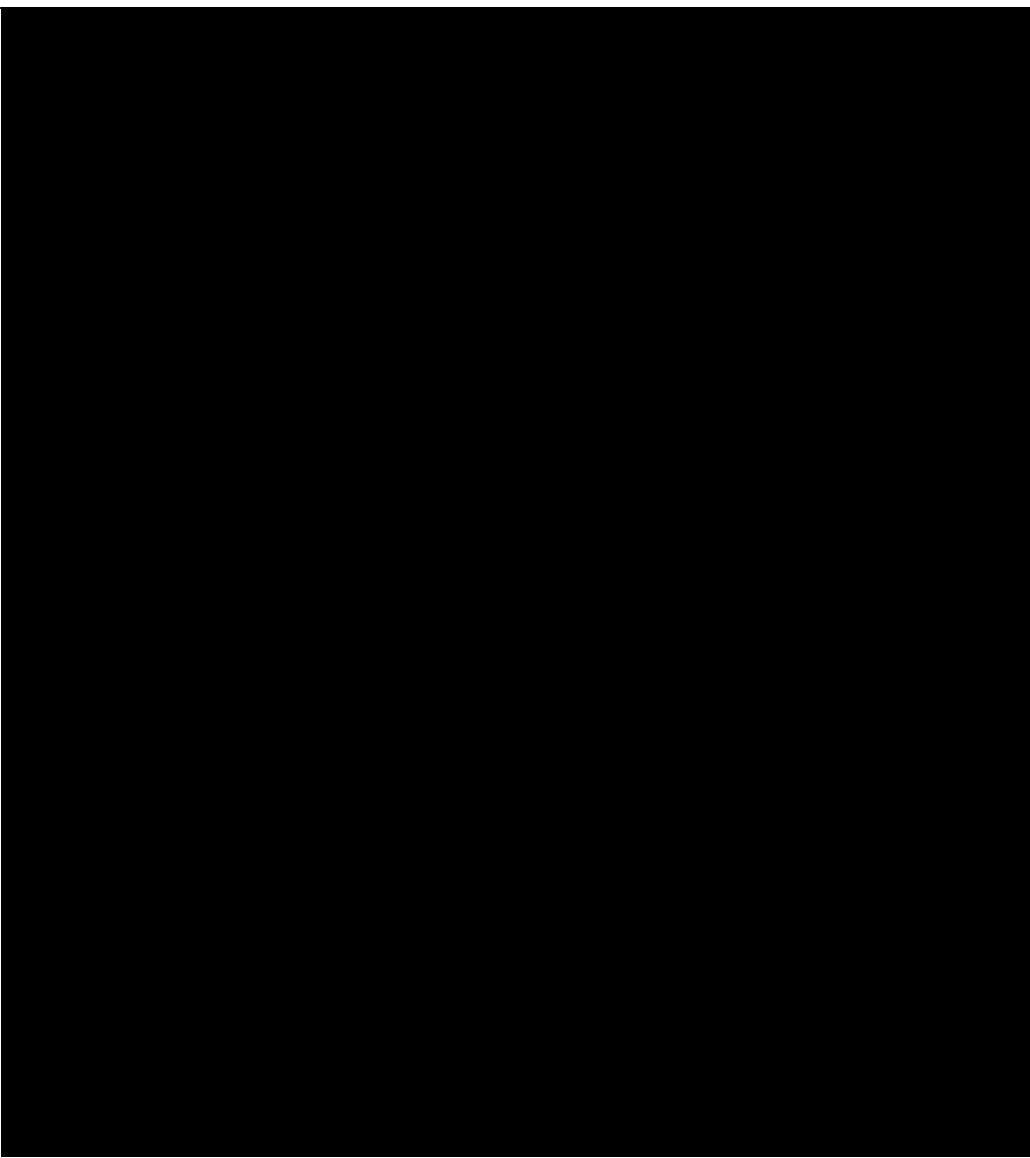
Trader Ad forms are available at the Public Affairs Office and may be filled out during normal working hours at Bldg. 1417. Ads may also be submitted through e-mail, but will only be accepted from those with an @usmc.mil address. If you are active duty, retired military or a family member and do not have an @usmc.mil address you can go to the PAO page of the base Web site at: <http://www.29palms.usmc.mil/dirs/pao/> and complete a request to publish an ad.

The limitations for ads are: 15-word limit, limit of two ads per household and the Trader may be used only for noncommercial classified ads containing items of personal property offered by and for individuals authorized to use this service. Such ads must represent incidental exchanged not of sustained business nature.

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

To have a "House For Sale" ad run in the Observation Post, applicants must provide Permanent Change of Station orders and have the ad approved by Base Housing. This ensures the Combat Center Trader is not used for commercial real estate endeavors.

Ads are run on a first-come, first-serve, space available basis. If you have questions please call 830-6213.



CCS, from A3

bystanders can be placed on any road in any weather.

The simulator is not only used to recreate the chaos of combat, which can get very intense even in the virtual world, but also teaches leadership skills, Viramontes said. “We can also see how leaders will react in combat situations here at home before they reach combat.”

The great thing about accurate simulations is when a mistake is made, no matter how big or fatal, all it takes is the touch of the reset button to turn back time and do it again, Viramontes added.

When the simulator is completed, the Marines gath-

er and watch a replay of their training with an instructor walking them through their good and bad points.

“When they see a replay they learn a lot faster,” said Doug Percy, an instructor at the Battle Simulation Center. The Combat Center is the only base with the benefit of a replay room.

The simulator also offers units the option to conduct rehearsals before field training exercises to give them an idea of what they will go through, Viramontes said.

The CCS is an optional simulator, mainly utilized by the units completing Enhanced Mojave Viper, the installation’s premier combined arms pre-deployment training exercise.

The Battle Simulation Center staff encourages any unit that wishes to refresh their combat training to come and experience the CCS.

All Marines need in order to use the simulator is their flak jacket and helmet and an officer or staff noncommissioned officer in charge to be present, Viramontes said.

“We fight like we train,” he said. “We want the Marines to feel what it is like to move around in their gear, so they know what to expect in real life. We also want the Marines’ superior here to evaluate them.”

To reserve a time for the simulator, contact the Battle Simulation Center at 830-4092.

MCTOG, from A6

MCTOG will continue providing a realistic training environment that is based on current doctrine, TTPs and best practices employed in theater by working together with organizations like JFIIT, the 505th Operations Squadron and others.

“Spartan Resolve and our exercise partners provide an incredible resource to our training audience that better prepares our battalion and regimental

staffs for the challenges of combat,” Szepesy said. “Together, we provide the creative solutions necessary to defeat this irregular warfare threat.”



DOD PHOTO BY CASEY E. BAIN

An analyst inspects a light armored vehicle before it deploys as part of Exercise Spartan Resolve at Marine Corps Base Camp Lejeune, N.C.

ADVERTISEMENT

TOUGH MINDED
OPTIMISM
by Lou Gerhardt



We are now well into the third year of this weekly column which seems to be of some value to many of you.

I am grateful to Cindy Melland and Hi-Desert Publishing Company for allowing me to assist my worthy non-profit projects that make a positive difference in the lives of many people.

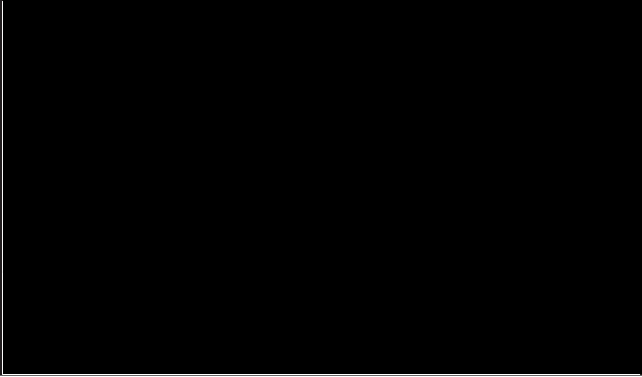
I offer this weekly column because I truly believe it helps many to maintain a positive attitude regardless of circumstances.

When I write about having a positive attitude, I am not suggesting that you should abandon common sense or deny the reality of extremely difficult situations.

Tough minded optimists are not naïve, Pollyannaish, or unrealistic. They “smell the coffee” in every difficulty. They are pragmatic, logical, and extremely practical. On the other hand, they have the audacity of hope and a certain belief that something of value may come from any negative experience.

Have hope, dear friends. Tomorrow will be different. Tomorrow you may hear the music,meet the person, read the book, have the insight, think the thought that changes your life in a beautiful way.

Former Secretary of State Colin Powell is a tough minded optimist. It was Powell who said with deep Believe it, my friends, and anticipate with optimism tomorrow, next week, and all your days.





Early, discounted registration for Marine Corps Marathon now open



PHOTO COURTESY OF TRAGEDY ASSISTANCE PROGRAM FOR SURVIVORS

Some of the 18,281 participants in the 33rd Marine Corps Marathon cross the starting line Oct. 26, 2008.

DIANE DURDEN
PUBLIC AFFAIRS SPECIALIST

Early and discounted registration for the 35th Marine Corps Marathon runs now thru Feb. 22.

Active duty and reserve service members receive a 15 percent discount off the \$90 registration fee when registering before Feb. 22. General registration with no discount begins Feb. 23. For more information on registering or on other races hosted by the MCM, visit <http://www.marine-marathon.com>.

The race is scheduled for

Oct. 30 in Washington, D.C. The 26.2 mile course weaves through the nation's capital, showcasing its monuments, and ends at the Marine Corps War Memorial.

Training to run or walk a marathon can be overwhelming, but there are trained coaches ready to help you. Road Rage Runners, the Combat Center's running club, will provide coaches and a training program to assist participants in crossing the finish line. Whether you are a runner or walker, there is a training program for you. The program will include clinics on proper stretching, hydra-

tion, nutrition on the run and choosing the proper shoes and clothing.

Marine Corps Community Service-eligible runners and walkers of all levels are welcome. Information meetings at the East Gym and Fitness Center are scheduled for Jan. 26 at 5 p.m., Feb. 1 at 11:30 a.m., Feb. 9 at 5 p.m., and Feb. 15 at 11:30 a.m.

For additional information, contact Diane Durden at 218-4584 or diane.durden.ctr@usmc.mil, or Melissa Dowd at 830-6440 or DowdMC@usmc-mccs.org.

See more photos on page B4

Marine volunteers take part in annual Film Festival

STORY AND PHOTOS
BY LANCE CPL.
ANDREW D. THORBURN
COMBAT CORRESPONDENT

PALM SPRINGS, Calif. – Moviegoers lined the street outside Regal Cinemas, in Palm Springs, for the annual Palm Springs International Film Festival Saturday.

Six Marines made the hour-long ride to volunteer

their time and learn about the festival through the Single Marine Program.

"I have never been to a film festival before," said Pfc. Emmanuel Martinez, a student with Marine Corps Communication-Electronics School. "I didn't know what they entailed or how they work, so I wanted to come, and I figured volunteering was a good way to get out here."

Holly Copeland, the festival's volunteer coordinator, said the volunteers make a monumental difference in a festival of this size.

"[There are] over 800 volunteers with about a tenth of that being paid staff so we couldn't do the festival without volunteers," she said. "Every year the festival gets

See FILM, B4



One of the Marine volunteers, with the Single Marine Program, passes out voting ballots to patrons of the annual Palm Springs International Film Festival at Regal Cinemas, in Palm Springs, Calif., Saturday.



Private First Class Emmanuel Martinez, a student with Marine Corps Communication-Electronics School, talks with one of the moviegoers during the annual Palm Springs International Film Festival at Regal Cinemas, in Palm Springs, Calif., Saturday.

Going up?



LANCE CPL. ANDREW D. THORBURN

Ryan Hale, a player with Ole School, throws the two-pointer just out of reach for a VMU-1 player during a Commanding General's Intramural Basketball League game Tuesday night at the East Gym and Fitness Center. Ole School smashed VMU-1 70-37.



LANCE CPL. ANDREW D. THORBURN

Neil Dodson, a player with VMU-1, drives through the Ole School defense for a layup during a Commanding General's Intramural Basketball League game Tuesday night at the East Gym and Fitness Center. VMU-1 was served a stunning defeat by Ole School 70-37.

See page B3 for more photos



'Country Strong' is strained corn

NEIL POND

AMERICAN PROFILE

“Country Strong”

Rated PG-13

A modern-day melodrama set in the world of country music, "Country Strong" stars Oscar-winner Gwyneth Paltrow as Kelly Cantor, a singing superstar trying to recover from a personal and professional setback.

Real-life country singer Tim McGraw plays her manager-husband, James, anxious to get his songbird aloft again after alcoholism grounded her career.

Along for the ride as opening acts on Kelly's big-stakes comeback tour are two musical greenhorns, beauty queen Chiles, Leighton Meister from TV's "Gossip Girl," and cowboy-hatted hunk Beau, Garret Hedlund, fresh from "Tron."

Beau has been bedding Kelly on the sly, and Kelly's pretty sure cutie-pie Chiles has her sights on James. How will this romantic rectangle shake out once the tour bus hits the highway? Will Kelly reclaim her country crown? Or will the young "country Barbie" upstage her – and take her man, to boot?



Gwyneth Paltrow plays Kelly Cantor, a singing superstar trying to recover from a personal and professional setback.

The good news is Paltrow, Meister and Hedlund really can sing. And sing they do, digging in convincingly to the sturdy soundtrack of catchy original songs penned by some of Nashville's top tunesmiths.

But the rest of "Country Strong" is an all-over-the-place mess of show-business clichés, clunky character stereotypes and a disjointed storyline that makes it impossible to connect all the scattered, implausible dots.

Paltrow's character has

two basic settings, drunk and depressed, but the actress does what she can with such a limited, morose palette.

We're told that she's a "six-time Grammy winner," but nothing we see or hear supports why we should believe it. Likewise, when a newspaper raves that newcomer Chiles is "the new Carrie Underwood," it confounds everything we've come to know about her character's debilitating lack of onstage confidence and charisma.

Country fans, especially those whose knowledge of the format goes deeper than the week's Top 40 countdown, will enjoy seeing some familiar faces in the mix, including singer-songwriter Jim Lauderdale and

steel guitarist Chris Scruggs (Earl's grandson) as musicians in Beau's band, Ed Bruce as a scruffy nightclub owner, and Lari White, who had her moment in the musical spotlight in the 1990s, as a makeup artist.

At one point, Kelly vows to overcome the mess she's made. "I'm stronger than this!" she says. Cue the title track.

But alas, despite her rally for the big concert finale, she's not, and neither is the movie.

This cinema corn falls far short of the inspiring story of triumph and tragedy it wants viewers to buy. Too much about "Country Strong" is simply too weak and wobbly to hit the high dramatic notes to which it aspires.

Combat Center Sports



Elvis Tate, a player with Ole School, performs a jumping two pointer during a Commanding General's Intramural Basketball League game Tuesday night at the East Gym and Fitness Center. Ole School dribbled circles around VMU-1 70-37.

LANCE CPL. ANDREW D. THORBURN

Athlete of the Week

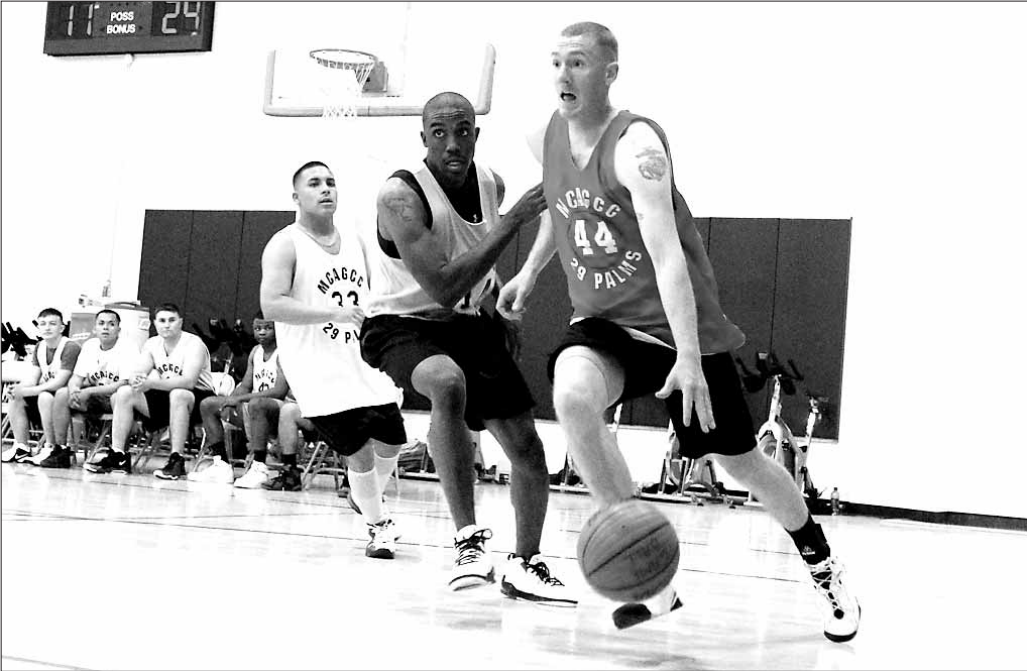


Name: Kenny Aprehe
Unit: Company B, 3rd Combat Engineer Battalion
Recognition: MVP for 3rd CEB
Favorite aspect of the sport: "It is good exercise."
Advice for aspiring players: "Work hard and play with all your heart in it."



Dian Bell, a player with Ole School, completes a layup during a Commanding General's Intramural Basketball League game Tuesday night at the East Gym and Fitness Center. Ole School defeated VMU-1 by a large margin of 70-37.

LANCE CPL. ANDREW D. THORBURN



Ryan Hale, a player with Ole School, breaks past a VMU-1 player during a Commanding General's Intramural Basketball League game Tuesday night at the East Gym and Fitness Center. Ole School defeated VMU-1 70-37.

LANCE CPL. ANDREW D. THORBURN

Marine Corps Marathon photos, from page B1



DIANE DURDEN

Several runners navigate the streets during the 35th Marine Corps Marathon held in Washington, D.C., Oct. 31, 2010. The MCM, known as the “People’s Marathon,” weaves through the nation’s capital, showcasing its monuments, and ends at the Marine Corps War Memorial.



DIANE DURDEN

One of several sign-spinners marks the 11th mile of the 26.2-mile-long race course of the 35th Marine Corps Marathon held in Washington, D.C., Oct. 31, 2010.



DIANE DURDEN

Volunteer Marines from the National Capital region stand prepared to hand water to the thousands of runners participating in the 35th Marine Corps Marathon held in Washington, D.C., Oct. 31, 2010.



LANCE CPL. ANDREW D. THORBURN

Marine volunteers with the Single Marine Program listen to instructions about different jobs at the entrance of the show-room at Regal Cinemas, Palm Springs, Calif., at the annual Palm Springs International Film Festival Saturday.

FILM, from B1

bigger and bigger, so we need more volunteers.”

The SMP has a long tradition of arranging for volunteers aboard the Combat Center for the festival.

“They get to go off base, which is a big deal for them,” said Jan Mason, the SMP driver for the trip. “It is a lot of fun. They are treated very well and have gotten to go to parties afterwards and meet with stars.”

Although the perks are what draw many potential volunteers, others like Martinez

said they volunteer for just the joy of helping others.

Whatever the motivation to help, Copeland said they are simply happy for the Marines’ time.

“They are wonderful to work with, and the film festival has a history of working with the Marines,” she said. “They come and are enthusiastic, hardworking, willing to do anything, and they are just a lot of fun to be around. Our other volunteers love working with them, and the moviegoers really enjoy it when the Marines are around.”