

OBSERVATION POST

MCAGCC TWENTYNINE PALMS

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U.S. Poison Centers raise alarm about toxic substance marketed as bath salts

JESSICA WEHRMAN

AMERICAN ASSOCIATION OF POISON CONTROL CENTERS

ALEXANDRIA, VA. - Doctors and clinicians at U.S. poison centers are increasingly concerned about products marketed as bath salts that are causing increased blood pressure, increased heart rate, agitation, hallucinations, extreme paranoia and delusions.

Just as people using synthetic marijuana marketed as herbal incense believed they would get a high, but instead

developed damaging symptoms, now products labeled as bath salts and laced with a dangerous chemical are eliciting extreme adverse events among those who use them looking for a high.

The products have been sold on the Internet and, in some states, are being sold at gas stations and head shops. They're known by a variety of names, including "Red Dove," "Blue Silk," "Zoom," "Bloom," "Cloud Nine," "Ocean Snow," "Lunar Wave," "Vanilla Sky," "Ivory Wave,"

"White Lightning," "Scarface" and "Hurricane Charlie."

"We are incredibly concerned about the extreme paranoia being reported by people who are taking these drugs," said Mark Ryan, director of the Louisiana Poison Center. He said the products are being touted as cocaine substitutes and are causing intense cravings akin to methamphetamine use. He said he worries that the paranoia could cause those experimenting with the drugs to harm themselves or others.

Remember...

In the military, use and/or misuse of these items can be punishable under the Uniformed Code of Military Justice. SECNAVINST 5300.28D currently prohibits the use of any substance "with the intent of inducing intoxication, excitement, or stupefaction of the central nervous system."

Henry A. Spiller, director of the Kentucky Regional Poison Center, said the patients his center has treated "are having a break with reality."

"They have completely lost it," he said.

The products are believed

to contain Methylenedioxy-pyrovalerone, or MPDV, a chemical that is not approved for medical use in the United States. Ryan said he also has received reports of these substances being sold as insect repellent or plant fertilizers.

Packages of the powdered substance labeled bath salts indicate that the products are "not for human consumption," but Ryan said most patients calling poison centers

See DRUGS, A9

2/7 HQ Co. spends day sharpening infantry skills



CPL. ANDREW S. AVITT
COMBAT CORRESPONDENT

Marines with Headquarters Company, 2nd Battalion, 7th Marine Regiment, attended refresher courses at Building 1707 to increase overall unit readiness and brush up on some infantry basics, Tuesday.

The Marines attended classes covering the Improved First Aid Kit and the Combat Life Savers course. They also refreshed their knowledge on weapons organic to an infantry unit and practiced with some of the weapons in the Indoor Simulated Marksmanship Trainer, a simulator which fosters hands-on, realistic weapons training.

"The whole point of the training is to teach non-infantry units infantry knowledge, since they are in an infantry battalion, and could potentially be out there with them," said Sgt. Nate Gerhart a combat marksmanship instructor. "For [communications] guys, it is very likely that they'll be attached to an infantry unit, so it's very important that they are familiar with the necessary skills."

The company made it their mission to get as many Marines out to the training, Gerhart said, estimating that more than 60 percent of the company came

See SUPPORT, A8

Private First Class John Winters, a Marine Corps Integrated Maintenance Management System clerk with 2nd Battalion 7th Marine Regiment, and native of Tigard, Ore., looks at his shot group at the Marine Corps Communication-Electronics School Indoor Simulated Marksmanship Trainer, Feb. 8.

CG recognizes innovators



LANCE CPL. ANDREW D. THORBURN

Brigadier Gen. H. Stacy Clardy III, the Combat Center's commanding general, recognized several Combat Center personnel for their work in helping to make the installation a better place to live and work. [From left to right] Capt. Michael Nolan, the ordnance maintenance officer for Exercise Support Division; Jeri Lyn Randolph, a management analyst for the Business Performance Office; Brig. Gen. Clardy; Steve Johnson, the deputy director for ESD; Lt. Col. Shawn Tatum, the officer in charge of ESD; and Dr. Alex P. Pacheco, the director of the Business Performance Office; pose for a group photo at the ESD director display Wednesday. Tatum and Johnson were awarded the Continuous Process Improvement Replication Award for their programs. Randolph received her Lean Six Sigma Green Belt Certification, while Nolan was presented with his LSS Black Belt Award for projects they implemented aboard the Combat Center.



CPL. M. C. NERL

Kev Lombard [far left] presents Staff Sgt. Ryan Harris with his certificate Feb. 4. Harris and other Marines with the Combat Center's Wounded Warriors Detachment learned the basics of video and film production, thanks to volunteers from the Wounded Marine Careers Foundation.

Wounded Warriors course teaches filmmaking skills

CPL. M. C. NERL

COMBAT CORRESPONDENT

Service members with the Combat Center's Wounded Warrior Detachment were offered the chance to expand on their communication skills

and add technical expertise to their resumés as they transition into the civilian world, said Kev Lombard, an instructor with the Wounded Marine Career Foundation, and a native of Washington, D.C.

The class covered a video

project from beginning to end, including all aspects of pre-production, production and post-production. Using those tools, Marines took their stories from their minds

See WOUNDED, A8



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



Hey Combat Center fans – Spread the word! The Combat Center has its own YouTube channel. Find it at <http://www.youtube.com/user/CombatCenterPAO>.

Military charities see green when you 'go green'

KRISTEN WARD

TriWest Healthcare Alliance

TRICARE West Region beneficiaries can assist military families and help save the environment with a simple click of a mouse.

Now through March 31, when a TRICARE beneficiary chooses to "go green" and opts-in for paperless statements, TriWest will contribute \$5 to one of the following military support organizations: Armed Services YMCA, Operation Homefront, Tragedy Assistance Program for Survivors or the USO.

Giving green

Each of the eligible military charities support active duty service members, veterans, military families and survivors in different ways.

- Operation Homefront – Provides emergency and morale assistance for service members, the families they leave behind, and for wounded warriors when they return home, and has filled the needs of more than 267,000 military families since 2002.

- Armed Services YMCA – Delivers quality social, educational and recreational programs and services to active duty military and family members. Its programs include children's waiting rooms at various military hospitals and Operation Hero.

- Tragedy Assistance Program for Survivors – Offers hope, healing, comfort and care to families grieving after the death of a service member through programs such as Survivor Seminars and Good Grief Camps.

- USO – Entertains and provides educational programs to service members and their families.

Going green

By registering at <http://www.triwest.com/gogreen>, TRICARE West Region beneficiaries can opt-in to receive paperless TRICARE communications, such as referral and authorization letters, claims and explanation of benefits statements.

Since launching the "Go Green" program more than a year ago, TriWest has already saved hundreds of thousands of sheets of paper from being printed and mailed. The "go green" option for TRICARE West Region customers is convenient, secure and simple.

For more information, visit <http://www.triwest.com/GoGreen> or <http://www.facebook.com/TriWest>.

Centerspeak

What song is the soundtrack to your life?

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



SGT. BENJAMIN PFEFFER
SERGEANT'S COURSE

"Three Little Birds' by Bob Marley, because it just helps me relax."



CPL. CHAD WOOTEN
WEAPONS COMPANY, 1ST BATTALION,
7TH MARINE REGIMENT

"Jeremiah was a Bullfrog' by Three Dog Night. My mom always sang it to me to calm me down."



CPL. BRITTANY MOLINA
INSTALLATION PERSONNEL ADMINISTRATION
CENTER, HEADQUARTERS BATTALION

"Green and Yellow,' because the Packers just won the Super Bowl."



PFC. JUSTIN SALAS
INSTALLATION PERSONNEL ADMINISTRATION
CENTER, HEADQUARTERS BATTALION

"Sad but True' by Metallica. It just pumps me up, and it's good to listen to."

Hot Topics

MOBILE TAX TEAM TO SERVICE CAMP WILSON TODAY

The Mobile Tax team will be setting up in Camp Wilson MVSD Bldg 5430 8 a.m. to 1 p.m. today to do taxes for ALL Marines in the area, except for itemizers, as the IRS is not taking them yet. The Mobile Tax Team will also be available by appointments only for units that want the team to process an entire section at once. Taxpayers needing to itemize their federal return will be able to file with the Tax Center starting Feb. 15. For more information or to schedule an appointment, call the Mobile Tax Team office at 830-4447 or the Main Tax Center at 830-4829.

PONY LEAGUE UNDERWAY

The Hi Desert Pony League Baseball and Softball 2011 season is currently underway. Evaluations will occur March 12 at Luckie Park. Call 910-546-6475 or log on to <http://29hdpl.clubspaces.com> for more information.

MEN'S VARSITY BASKETBALL TRYOUTS

Men's varsity basketball tryouts will be conducted at the East Gym at 6 p.m. on Tuesdays and 8 p.m. on Thursdays. The varsity basketball team is preparing for the West Coast Regional Championship from March 13-19 at MCB, Camp Pendleton, Calif. POC is Mr. Skip Best at 830-4092.

Marine Corps History

Feb. 15, 1898

28 Marines and 232 sailors lost their lives when the battleship MAINE was mysteriously sunk by an explosion in the harbor of Havana, Cuba. Though no definitive evidence linked the Spanish with the sinking, the cry went up, "Remember the Maine!" and by late April, the U.S. and Spain were at war.



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

"Looks like you forgot to put on your wings today, guess you can't put your hands in your pockets, huh?"



Tuff times in the Air Wing

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

SUDOKU #2082

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

CROSSWORD AND SUDOKU PUZZLES COURTESY OF © 2010 HOMETOWN CONTENT

FOUR-H CLUB

[Puzzle solutions on A9]

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64										65				66			
67														68			
70														71			
																72	

ACROSS

1. Words to Brutus
5. Father-and-son presidential name
10. Rigging support
14. "Oh, no! Not ___!"
15. Problem for Pauline
16. ___ mater
17. First miracle site
18. Milan's La ___
19. Goulash, for example
20. Four-H Club's footwear?
23. "Just ___ thought!"
24. Word before talk or rally
25. Tressed like Simba
29. In addition
31. Prefix for element #9
36. Handsome hunk
38. NATO member
40. Willy of "Free Willy," e.g.
41. Request for a pause in conversation at the Four-H Club?
44. Johnson of "Laugh-In"
45. Make a choice
46. Current unit
47. Distrustful
49. Wee bit
51. Dangerous mosquito
52. Ryan's "Love Story" costar
54. ___ Saud (former Arabian leader)
56. King of the Four-H Club?
64. Lay blacktop on
65. Grofé's "Grand Canyon ___"
66. Act the siren
67. Diva's performance
68. More off-the-wall
69. Controversial orchard spray
70. Place for a wish
71. City on the Aire
72. Title for Myra Hess

DOWN

1. Inscribe with acid
2. Bangkok tongue
3. Zingy taste
4. Brigham Young's state
5. Church recesses
6. Duplicity
7. Fast-shrinking sea
8. Highway distance marker
9. "Same Time, Next Year" playwright
10. The 407 7th, for one
11. Choir voice
12. "Peter Pan" henchman
13. Shooting marble
21. "I've ___ up to here!"
22. Sunblock letters
25. Taj ___
26. Love to death
27. Nick of "Cape Fear"
28. Rear-___ (road mishap)
30. "I'm ___ here!" (skedaddler's cry)
32. Jeweler's glass
33. Twisted the arm of
34. Earthy hue
35. Gives a thumbs-up or a thumbs-down, say
37. HBO competitor
39. "So, it's YOU!"
42. Part of SAT
43. Yemeni neighbor
48. Yevtushenko's "Babi ___"
50. Lost on purpose?
53. Disinfectant brand
55. Oktoberfest quaffs
56. Aesopian loser
57. Bad to the bone
58. "Hud" Oscar winner
59. Elude the seeker
60. Ticked pink
61. Wahine's dance
62. Way around London, once
63. Not there?
64. Dad, to a rustic

Combat Center Spotlight



Name: Elida Santana
Hometown: San Diego
Unit: American Red Cross.
 Volunteers at the Robert E. Bush Naval Hospital's labor and delivery ward.
Job title: Registered nurse
Job duties: Antepartum, delivery, postpartum, assist with patient care.
What do you like most about your job?: "It is very rewarding to see a mom come in with the biggest pain and leave with the happiest smile and a baby."
Significant achievements: First to graduate in her family and finishing nursing school.
Hobbies: Soccer, tennis, volleyball and hiking.
Time at Combat Center: Nine years

OBSERVATION POST

Commanding General Brig. Gen. H. Stacy Clardy III

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Mountain Leadership Course trains Marines to train Marines

STORY AND PHOTOS BY
LANCE CPL.

SARAH ANDERSON

COMBAT CORRESPONDENT

MARINE CORPS MOUNTAIN WARFARE TRAINING CENTER BRIDGEPORT, Calif. – Marines from all over the Corps

came to the Marine Corps Mountain Warfare Training Center for six weeks, from Jan. 10 to Feb. 18, to complete the Winter Mountain Leadership Course.

The course focuses on mountain and cold weather survival, snow mobility and how to effectively

accomplish missions while utilizing only issued gear in a mountainous cold environment.

During the six-week course, Marines are taught to patrol on skis, build survival shelters and are tested on their skills to independently apply the techniques taught to them.

The Marines are put through a week of pre-environmental training, where they learn to live in the rough, mountainous terrain and what tools to use.

The Marines are then taught to ski during a week-long course in Mammoth, Calif.

The instructors then step back and observe the students during a two-week saturation period, where they must apply everything they learned to survive in the wild.

The Marines traveled nearly everywhere on skis, and for Staff Sgt. James Hayes, a student of the course and training to be an instructor at the center, skiing was a new concept.

“I didn’t know how to ski before I came here,” Hayes said. “It’s been a really good experience, I’ve learned how to move and adapt to the cold weather.”

The course, while training in survival techniques, is also geared toward unit leadership, said Staff Sgt. Jack Roe, an MLC instructor.

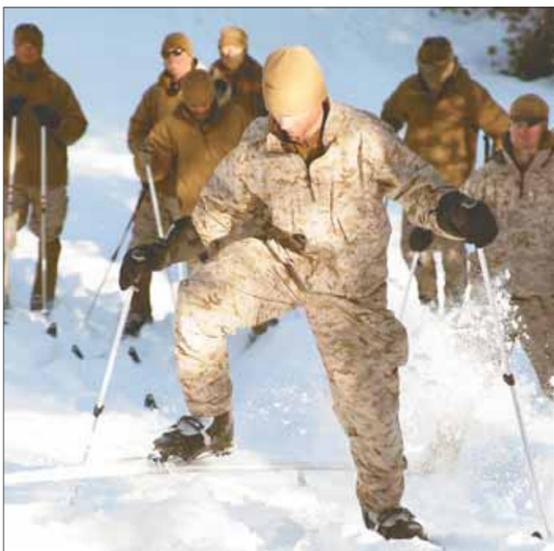
“This course provides units an asset of advisors to units, should the Marines ever find themselves in this sort of climate,” he said.

“My unit comes up to train here five days after we

See COURSE, A6



A Marine training in the Mountain Leadership Course performs ski techniques during a ski test Feb 3, at the Marine Corps Mountain Warfare Training Center in Bridgeport, Calif.



A Marine training in the Mountain Leadership Course performs ski techniques during a ski test Feb 3, at the Marine Corps Mountain Warfare Training Center in Bridgeport, Calif.



Marines training in the Mountain Leadership Course wait their turn to perform ski techniques during their ski test Feb 3, at the Marine Corps Mountain Warfare Training Center in Bridgeport, Calif.

Off-Limits reminder

The Combat Center community is reminded that STC Smoke Shop, located at 6001 Adobe Rd, Twentynine Palms, Calif., and Adobe Smoke Shop, located at 6441 Adobe Rd., also in Twentynine Palms, are off-limits to service members aboard the Combat Center and at any military installations within the Southwestern states.

The Armed Forces Disciplinary Control Board identified the two establishments as adversely affecting the health, safety, welfare and

morals of service members by selling “Spice” and “Salvia” substances, as addressed in a memorandum sent by Brig. Gen. H. Stacy Clardy III, the installation’s commanding general, to the area’s leaders.

The synthetic marijuana compounds are not listed within the Controlled Substances Act (21 U.S.C. sec. 812), but mimics their effects.

The memorandum constituted a lawful general order, and violation by U.S. military personnel is punishable under Article 92 of the Uniformed Code of Military Justice.

HQBN NCOs join 2/7 in mortars course

**STORY AND PHOTOS BY
LANCE CPL. D. J. WU**

COMBAT CORRESPONDENT

Noncommissioned officers from Headquarters Battalion joined with 81mm mortar platoon, Weapons Company, 2nd Battalion, 7th Marine Regiment, training at the Combat Center's Range 106 Feb. 3.

The training was part of a series of exercises that HQBN has been participating in. "We're trying to get our Marines out for some kind of training every quarter," said First Sgt. Nelson Hidalgo, first sergeant, Company B, HQBN.

The NCOs spent their day at Range 106 learning how mortar operations work, how to plot coordinates, to adjust mortar fire and the dropping of mortar rounds.

"We're really excited to work with mortarmen out here," said Sgt. Paul Charles, and electronics technician with G-6. "Being out here makes us feel like real Marines again."

Members of Weapons Co., 2/7, also performed forward observer exercises. The exercise helped qualify forward observers to serve in the field, and

gave 81mm Mortars platoon time to instruct HQBN.

"I think it's really important for all Marines, no matter what [Military occupational specialty], to get some cross training," said 1st Lt. Rory Smith, 81mm mortars platoon commander.

The Marines said they appreciated the opportunity to try something different.

"It's nice to know a little bit more about a different MOS outside the MOS that I work in everyday," said Cpl. Brittany Molina, the orders non-commissioned

officer in charge at Installation Personnel Administration Center.

It's important for these Marines to get out of the office and see what the units that they are supporting are doing out in the field, Hidalgo said. "We want to give them the opportunity to see what it is that they are supporting."

Headquarters Battalion plans on having more training exercises in the near future, Hidalgo said. "We'll probably do one per quarter and take a different group out every time."



Marines send an 81mm mortar round downrange during an exercise designed to qualify forward observers at Range 106 Feb. 3.



Noncommissioned officers attending the 81mm mortar forward observer exercise receive a class on how to plot and call for adjustments for mortar fire at Range 106 Feb. 3.



Members of 81mm mortars platoon, Weapons Company, 2nd Battalion, 7th Marine Regiment show Headquarters Battalion personnel how to properly use the sights on an M252 81mm medium weight mortar during a training exercise at Range 106 Feb. 3.

**Looking
for local
entertainment?**

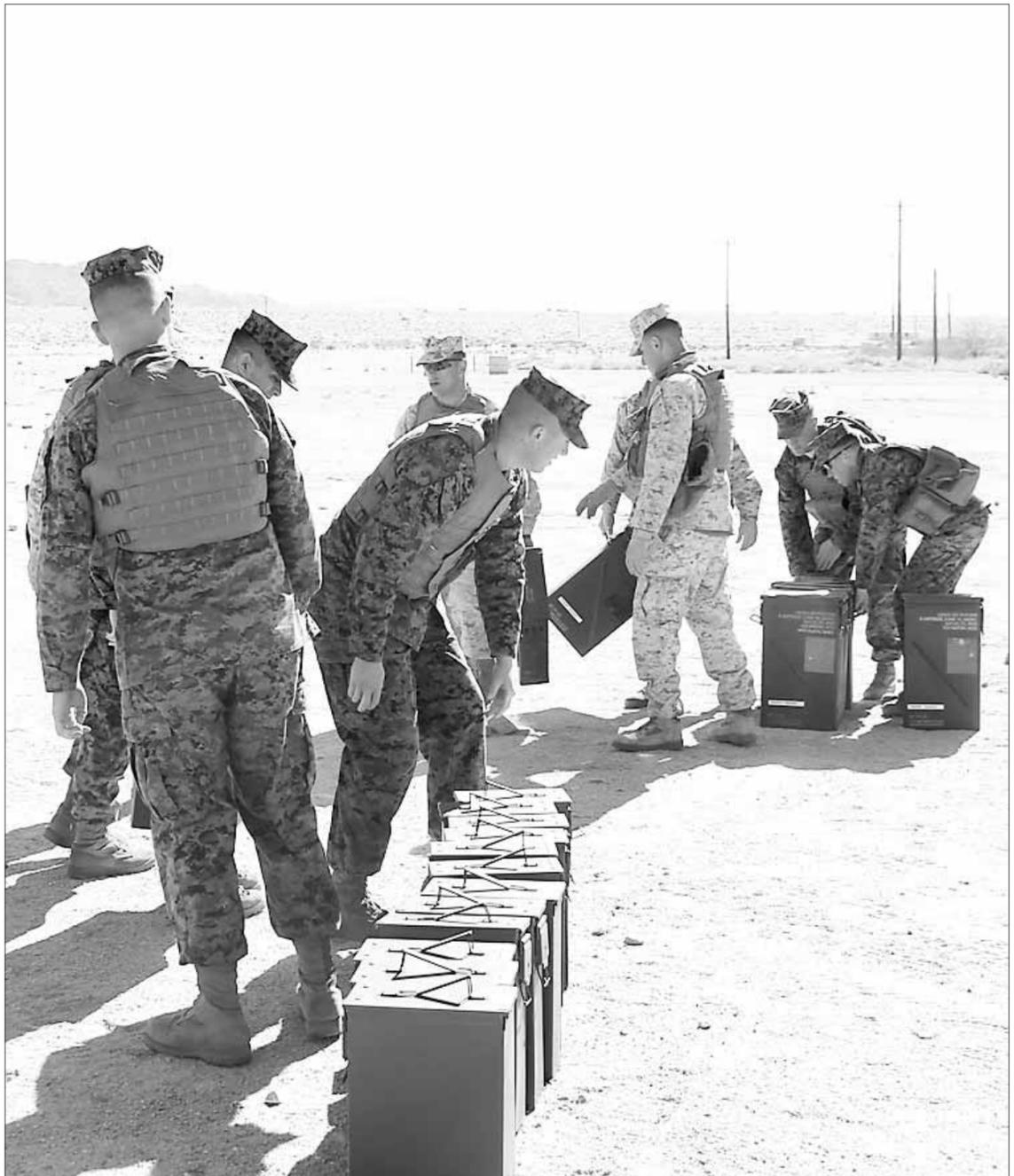
See page B2
for our
**NEW LIBERTY CALL
SECTION**



Marines of 81mm mortars platoon, Weapons Company, 2nd Battalion, 7th Marine Regiment, fire mortars down range during an exercise designed to qualify forward observers, at Range 106 Feb. 3.



Range safety officer and 81mm mortars platoon commander 1st Lt. Rory Smith give a safety brief before firing started at Range 106 Feb. 03.



Members of Headquarters Battalion help 81mm mortars platoon, Weapons Company, 2nd Battalion, 7th Marine Regiment, unload ammunition for a training exercise at Range 106 Feb. 03.

Relax with the paper

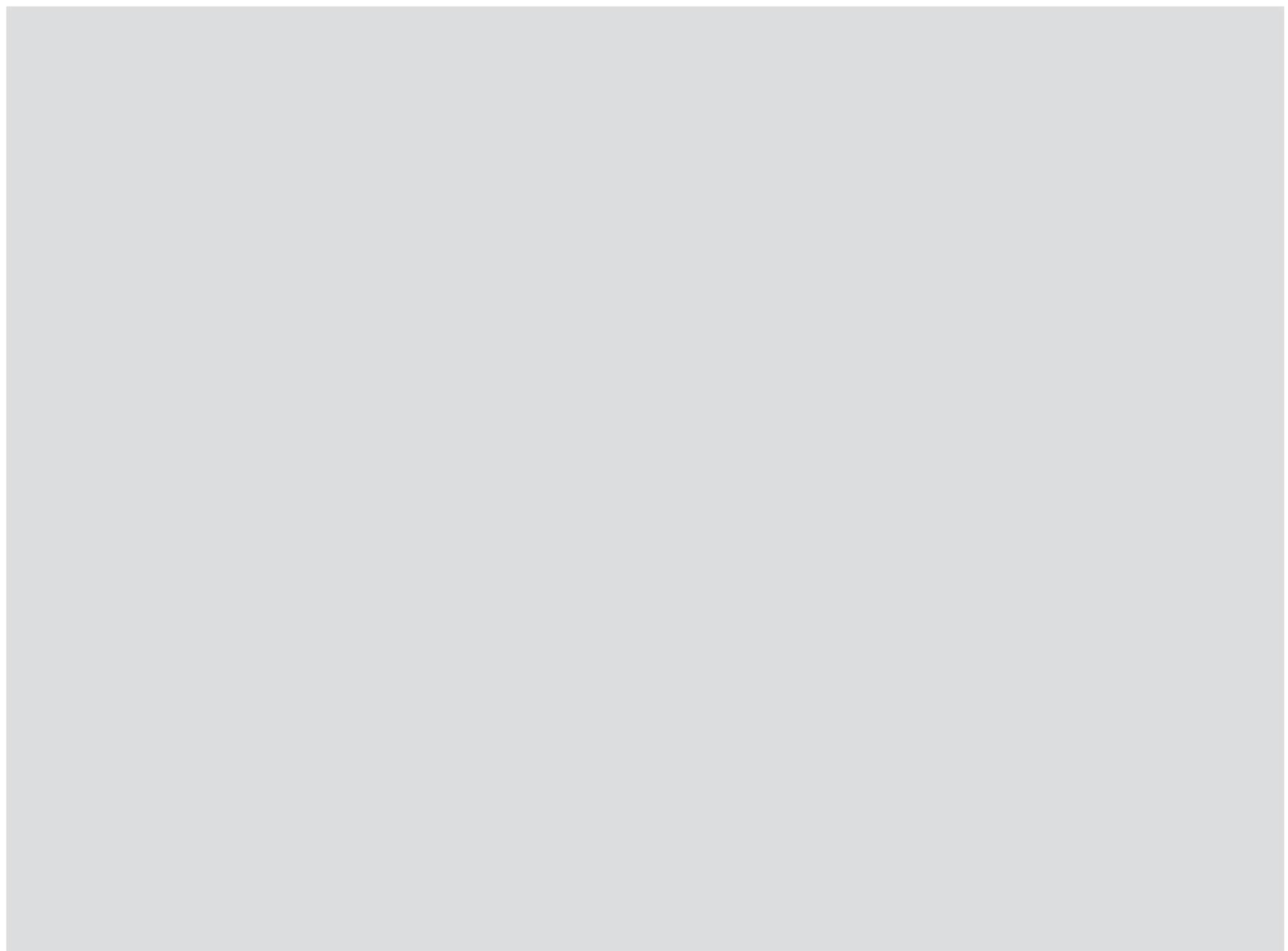
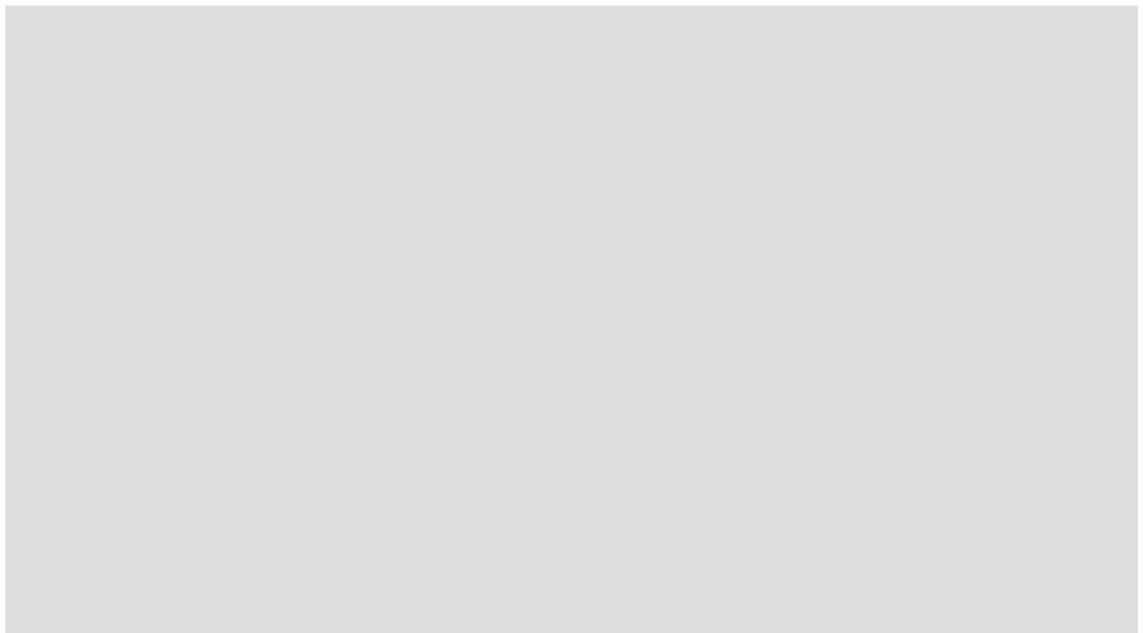
Wednesdays and Saturdays
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The Desert Trail

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The Observation Post



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Simulation keeps Combat Center Marines in fight

LANCE CPL. SARAH ANDERSON
COMBAT CORRESPONDENT

Marines training in Enhanced Mojave Viper, the installation's premier combined arms pre-deployment training exercise, turn to the Battle Simulation Center in Camp Wilson to enhance their understanding of cultures they may encounter while they are deployed.

The Deployable Virtual Training Environment is a simulation designed to teach Marines up to five languages, cultural nuances, convoy operations and the steps to call for fire support. The language program even teaches the Marines parts of languages other commercial language learning programs don't, said George Hernandez, an instructor at the Battle Simulation Center.

"It focuses on military terms and words like 'gun' and 'bomb,' where you won't learn those with programs like Rosetta Stone."

Of the five languages the DVTE offers, which are tactical French, Iraqi, Pashtu, Dari and tactical Indonesian, the Marines learn basic phrases and interact with virtual people of that culture. Depending on how well the Marines retain the knowledge of the language is how happy or irritated the responses of the virtual villagers are.

"It really helps and allows us to understand the basis of the language and culture," said Cpl. Jacob Primrose, a Marine from 2nd Combat Engineer Battalion, 2nd Marine Division, out of Camp Lejeune, N.C., who is currently participating in EMV.

"Learning things like this will help us win the hearts and minds of the people," added Gunnery Sgt. Corey



LANCE CPL. SARAH ANDERSON

A Marine from 2nd Combat Engineer Battalion trains on the Deployable Virtual Training Environment at the Battle Simulation Center in Camp Wilson Tuesday.

Woodrich, a platoon sergeant in Mobility Assault Co. for 2nd CEB. "The more we know them and the more they know us, the better our chances are they are willing to help us."

The simulation also teaches Marines the steps needed to call in fire. It's a good way for Marines to learn and actually call in fire without taking the time or recourses to do it in real life, Hernandez said. It also gives the Marines a chance to learn how to fix their mistakes if they mess up, he added.

Much like when using the Combat Convoy Simulator, which is also located at the Battle Simulation Center, the Marines can interact with

each other virtually on their computers to practice convoy operations.

This program allows the Marines to work together while utilizing time and creating room for mistakes in a virtual setting, said Hernandez, a native of Bellport, N.Y.

"Marines came back from Iraq really appreciating this program," Hernandez said. "They enjoyed not having an interpreter with them everywhere they went. Also, the people really appreciated Americans having some knowledge of their language."

For more information or to schedule an appointment for any of the four simulations at the Battle Simulation Center, call 830-4192.



SGT. MELVIN LOPEZ

Officer Christopher Douglas, DeSoto Police Department (left) and Marine recruiter Staff Sgt. Garrett Pellerzi, Recruiting Substation Dallas South, Recruiting Station Dallas (right) pose in front of a squad car at the DeSoto Police headquarters. Pellerzi was instrumental in the capture of a fleeing fugitive the evening of Jan. 16. The thief almost got away with approximately \$1,500 after robbing an El Chico Restaurant in the Dallas suburb.

Marine recruiter apprehends armed robber at local restaurant

SGT. MELVIN LOPEZ

8TH MARINE CORPS DISTRICT

DESOTO, Texas – A local Marine recruiter became a hero on the evening of Jan. 16, after he managed to nab an alleged thief who held up a Mexican restaurant where he was having dinner.

Staff Sgt. Garrett Pellerzi, a canvassing recruiter, Recruiting Substation Dallas South, Recruiting Station Dallas, was sitting in a corner booth at an El Chico Café in the Dallas suburb of DeSoto, Texas, at approximately 9:45 p.m. when he saw a man wearing a black, hooded sweatshirt and black pants enter the eatery and walk into the kitchen.

"I could hear something going on, but didn't hear any screams or anything too loud, so I just watched the back area for a minute," said the 28-year-old Quitman, Texas, native.

Pellerzi's server ran out of the eatery's side door and

seconds later, the man in black ran after him. The recruiter, suspecting foul play, gave chase staying within 50 yards of the suspect, winding through nearby shopping centers and alleys.

The thief made it to a nearby Ross department store and attempted to hide evidence.

"I ran up to the corner and when I got to the parking lot, he was taking off his black hoodie, hiding it by the front tire of a truck that was parked," Pellerzi said. "At that time, I got on the phone with DeSoto Police Department to tell them where we were and what direction the suspect was going."

Unwilling to get caught, the gunman continued his escape outside of Pellerzi's view.

"By then, he had figured out I was chasing him and he took off running, so I took off after him and

stayed on the phone with the police," said Pellerzi.

The alleged robber ran another third of a mile until he arrived at an On The Border restaurant, but not before tripping on his way toward the entrance. Without his knowledge, he ran into a restaurant where three police officers were having dinner.

Pellerzi arrived and noticed him walk into a restroom. He remained outside and waited for police to arrive. Within seconds, six of DeSoto's finest pulled up and surrounded the establishment, blocking all exits.

The suspect almost eluded police. Minutes after entering the restroom, he exited wearing different attire; a white long-sleeved t-shirt and gray flannel pants. The thief appeared calm but had a look on his face Pellerzi described as an 'oh crap' expression.

Police immediately drew

See ROBBER, A9



LANCE CPL. SARAH ANDERSON

The Mountain Leadership Course at the Marine Corps Mountain Warfare Training Center in Bridgeport, Calif., teaches unit leaders survival techniques, mobility and mountain living in a snowy mountainous environment. The six-week course also focuses on strengthening the skills the Marines learned before returning to their parent units.

COURSE, from A3

graduate," added Staff Sergeant Anson Agooshboy, a platoon sergeant with Battery T, 5th Battalion, 11th Marine Regiment. "I've learned a lot of information I can pass down to my Marines so they can adapt to this environment. I am really excited to give it all back to them."

The end of the course consists of a four-day practical application period

where the Marines are given missions to complete. Instructors observe, but are hands-off, forcing the students to work together and apply everything they had learned.

"This is not an easy course," Roe said. "It's hard and people can lose 10-to-15 pounds up here."

"It's definitely worth it, and is valuable information and experience if ever found in this environment," he said.



KELLY O'SULLIVAN

Former Marine and Yucca Valley Chrysler service manager Jody Davis, left, and technician Michael Hedge, discuss repairs to be done to Lance Cpl. Tristan Bell's car.

Local dealership helps deployed Marine's family

KELLY O'SULLIVAN

THE DESERT TRAIL

TWENTYNINE PALMS, Calif. – For two years, Sgt. Jody Davis and Lance Cpl. Tristan Bell trained hard with their comrades in their light armored vehicle, the older Marine teaching the younger everything he needed to know to be a successful gunner.

“He’s just one of those guys who put his pride aside and said, ‘teach me,’” Davis said of Bell, who started out as Davis’ driver in 3rd Light Armored Reconnaissance Battalion, known as the “Wolfpack.”

Both men subscribed to the battalion’s motto, “The strength of the pack is the wolf, the strength of the wolf is the pack.”

They spent hours going over things like how long it takes a round to get from point A to point B, details Bell would memorize so he wouldn’t have to think about them in combat.

When Bell and 3rd LAR deployed to Afghanistan from the Marine Corps Air Ground Combat Center at the end of October, platoon sergeant Davis stayed behind, confident he’d prepped his men well.

A master gunner who saw plenty of action in Iraq during Operation Iraqi Freedom, Davis had decided to leave the Corps when his enlistment was up in December.

He would miss serving with Bell and the other men of his platoon, but with a wife and a 2-year-old, life as a civilian and a job as service manager at Yucca Valley Chrysler Center was looking pretty good.

Like any good mentor, Davis offered his help on the home-front should Bell or his wife, Amanda, a nursing student who lives on base, need it.

Three months into his deployment, Bell, who grew up in Billings, Mont., and joined the Marines in December 2007, found himself in need.

On Wednesday, Jan. 19, his LAV was hit by an improvised

explosive device during a skirmish with insurgents.

All six Marines inside were injured; all survived. Bell and several others were knocked unconscious, and the lance corporal also suffered a strained back and banged-up knees.

“All I remember from it was waking up to radios, ammo and a rifle on top of me,” he wrote in an e-mail in response to questions from The Desert Trail. “The smell of HME (homemade explosives) and diesel was enough to choke the life out of anyone ... there was definitely someone watching over us that day. There were no major injuries.”

One Marine was medically evacuated to the States for treatment. The rest, including Bell, were sent to the Wounded Warrior facility at Camp Leatherneck to recover.

“We should be back out there in the fight within the next week and a half,” Bell wrote on Feb. 5.

A couple of weeks after arriving at Camp Leatherneck, Bell sent Davis a private message on Facebook, telling him he was OK, but needed help at home.

“Sgt., I have a quick favor to ask of you,” he wrote, Jan. 28. “My wife needs some help jump-starting my car. It is parked in the garage, and the battery is dead, but she needs to move it. The power steering is out as well, so she won’t be able to drive it once she gets it started. If you could help her out, that would be awesome.”

Knowing he could turn to his former sergeant was a great comfort to the injured Marine.

“Jody is an awesome guy, and the reason I e-mailed him was because I knew I could count on and trust him,” Bell wrote in his Feb. 5 e-mail to the newspaper. “As our platoon sergeant, he always took care of us and made sure we had everything we needed. I saw him just days before I left

for Afghanistan and he made sure I knew he would be there for me and my wife no matter what we needed.”

Davis wasted no time keeping his promise; he called Amanda Bell the day he received the message and met her at her home that night.

Like a typical Marine, he went the extra mile for the Bells. After getting a green light from his bosses at Yucca Valley Chrysler, Davis drove the car, sans power steering, to the dealership’s Twentynine Palms service center so technician Michael Hedge could run a diagnostics test and start making the repairs and lot porter Roy Vasquez could detail it.

A grateful Bell, unaware that the dealership was covering the cost, thanked Davis after his wife told him the battery would be charged, the alternator replaced and the power steering fixed.

“I really appreciate it,” he wrote. “Let me know how much it costs and I’ll have Amanda get the money to you.”

“Don’t worry about the cost. It is compliments of Yucca Valley Chrysler. I’m just glad that I am able to help,” Davis wrote back. “It’s great talking to you. Tell the guys I said hi when you see them.”

That act of kindness resonated with Bell.

“To tell you the truth, I almost cried,” Bell wrote in his e-mail to the paper. “I never thought that a car company would do something like that for anyone ... you always hear the stories about that kind of stuff, but I never thought it would happen to me.”

Davis said he was happy to help and appreciates that Yucca Valley Chrysler made it possible to make a real difference for a young warrior who will stay in the fight until 3rd LAR returns home at the end of May.

“Anyone would help him out,” Davis said. “That means a lot that he was comfortable enough to call me.”

Marines training helps Afghan police prosper

LANCE CPL. JEREMY FASCI

1 MARINE EXPEDITIONARY FORCE

SANGIN, Afghanistan – Afghan National Police officers stationed near Forward Operating Base Jackson have been taking part in four-day training cycles to build their skills.

During these four-day cycles 10-14 ANP, from FOB Jackson and the ANP checkpoints close to it, come together for classes on proper hygiene, ethics, patrolling and searching techniques and spend time on the rifle range.

“We are establishing a program for the ANP to help them prosper in their police work,” said Robert Finch, an Embedded Police Mentor with 3rd Battalion, 5th Marine Regiment. “The experience level that we can bring to the young police department here allows us to give them a head start instead of starting from the bottom. We can also give them shortcuts to becoming a productive police department.”

Pooling officers from different checkpoints allows the ANP commanders to continue providing security for the people while allowing their junior officers to be professionally trained. The checkpoints where these officers are coming from are vital to the security of the district.

In addition to learning technical and tactical skills during these lessons, they also learn the basic principles of community policing.

“Hopefully we can establish some sort of community relations,” said Finch, 50, from San Antonio. “The community

for years has been to the negative side, but the community is responding positively to the police now.”

Understanding the relationship the police have with the community they serve is vital to success in Sangin.

“These classes were important because we learned how we are supposed to treat the people and how that will influence their opinion of us,” said Sgt. Fazilrahman, 19, a police officer in Sangin, from Samangan province. “We can see the results because there are a lot more people in the

bazaar, and they are helping the police by giving us information and involving us in the problems they are having in the area.”

Having advisor teams from the United States is an enormous help to the police in Sangin because even though the terrain is different the fundamentals of policing are the same.

“People are people, they want to be treated fairly by the police department,” said Finch. “You have to be professional at all times and they are learning that, they are learning that their job does matter.”



LANCE CPL. JEREMY FASCI

An Afghan National Police officer takes notes during one of the classes given to the attendees during a four-day training cycle at Forward Operating Base Jackson, Jan. 18. These classes are designed to teach the officers their role as police officers and how to implement these tactics while providing security.

ADVERTISEMENT

Did you know?

The Liberty Call page on B2 now has Combat Center club information

Excursions Enlisted Club

Bloodstripes NCO Club

Hashmarks 29 SNCO Club

Combat Center's Officers' Club

SUPPORT, from A1

through that day.

While training in the ISMT, Marines practiced hammer pairs, failure to stop drills and engaged moving targets to hone their shooting fundamentals and get a better idea of what needs improvement.

After each simulation, Marines were shown their shots in succession to help them associate what they were doing at the time to where their virtual rounds landed, he said.

"If Marines take it seriously, it's good training," Gerhart said. "You also don't have to worry about all the logistics, like arranging transportation to the range and picking up ammo. With the ISMT, you just come in for a couple of hours."

Lance Cpl. Alex Rodriguez, a Marine who shot at the ISMT that day, said the simulator helped to reinforce basics he and some of his fellow Marines don't get to use often.

"[Communications] units don't usually get a chance to get out there and shoot so shooting in the ISMT gives us a good refresher," he said.

The day spent training in infantry weapons and skills, could come in handy as the unit prepares to deploy with the 31st Marine Expeditionary Unit later this year.



CPL. ANDREW S. AVITT

Marines stand "at the ready," and wait for their virtual targets to appear during training in the Combat Center's Indoor Simulated Marksmanship Trainer, Feb. 8.



CPL. M. C. NERL

Sergeant Brandon Del Fiorentino, a patient with the Combat Center's Wounded Warrior Detachment, talks with Craig Jurkoic, a volunteer who helped the Marines of the detachment with editing their video projects. The Marines learned about all aspects of video and film production during their month-long class.

WOUNDED, from A1

to the drawing board, through the camera and into an edited video.

"The basic premise of our class is healing through story-telling," Lombard said. "The morale of the detachment here has really improved, the Marines have really taken to it. You can tell they've been given a boost."

"When we first got here, many of them barely said a word," he added. "Since they've learned a new way to communicate and express themselves, they've had a lot more energy, and there's a different mood around this place."

Staff Sgt. Russell Evans, a patient with the detachment, who is in charge of the Warriors Athletic Reconditioning Program here, also said the class overall has been great for the Marines.

"How the class impacted all of them has been awesome to see," said the White

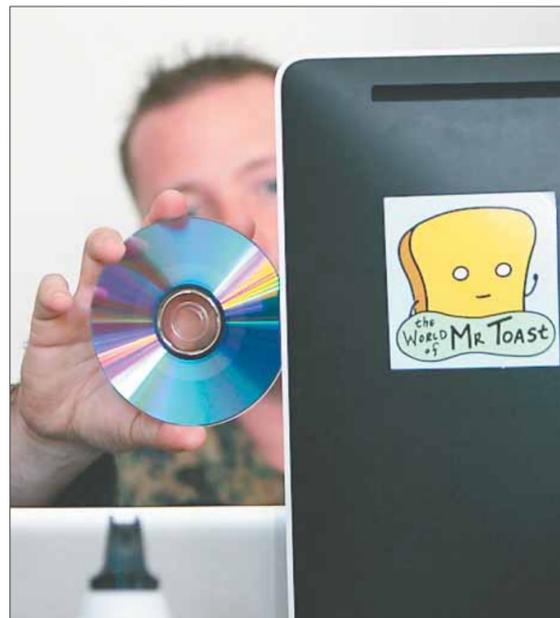
Top, Ariz., native. "It's awesome to see all these Marines in different stages of recovery come out of their shells and open up with a new way to express themselves."

"Most, if not all of them, had individual skills come out they didn't even know they had," Evans added.

Corporal Christopher Lands, another patient who elected to take the class, is battling with post-traumatic stress disorder and learning about himself through a new outlet.

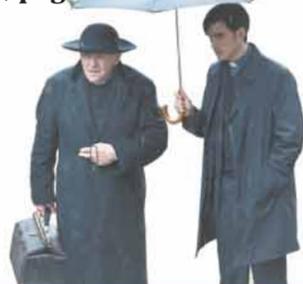
"I decided to take the class because I was always interested in how films and movies were made," said Lands, who is from Cincinnati. "When we started I had no idea, I just wanted to try it all [movie making], but I really took to the editing portion."

Lands says when he finally transitions to the civilian world, he plans to take what he's learned, and hopefully take it to the next level as a career.



CPL. M. C. NERL

Sergeant Brandon Del Fiorentino, a member of the Combat Center's Wounded Warrior Detachment, finishes up his final project Feb. 4. Del Fiorentino and the other Marines of the detachment received their diplomas from the course that day. Many plan to pursue a career in the film industry after their transition to the civilian world.



Hobby shop inspires wooden aspirations

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

The Combat Center community has the tools and resources to tap into a fading skill and create almost anything they can think of at the Wood Hobby Shop.

"It provides them with a skill set that not many people have," said Sgt. Gilbert Hidalgo, an Armorer for Company V., 2nd Battalion, 7th Marine Regiment.

Donald Miller, the manager of the Wood Hobby Shop, has seen many people come in and create some truly unique pieces.

"I have seen stuff all the way up to ultra light aircraft, kayaks and surfboards," said the Twentynine Palms native. "You are only limited by your imagination."

But not every project has to so complex.

"Lately we have been making a lot of display cases," Miller said. "The units will get one of their guys who are into woodworking for display cases for burial flags and medals for family members of the ones that didn't come back."

When someone takes the time to make something with their hands, it adds a special something to the piece compared to just buying it in a store.

"Doing something with your hands which is a fading trait as well," said Hidalgo, a Houston native. Not many are making and building. Everybody is buying. It is a valuable skill set because you can sit there and say 'I built that.'"

Even though the Wood Hobby Shop has so much to offer Combat Center personnel, they have had a problem with people taking advantage of them.

"Our hardest thing is getting the word out that we are here," Miller said. "We are finally getting into the younger troops as they find us. We did a survey, and spouses didn't know we are available to them. So, we have been working with the (Family Readiness Officers) to get the word out better that we are here."

Miller said use of the Wood Hobby Shop comes at the price of simply completing an hour-long safety class held Wednesdays at 6 p.m. and Saturdays at 11 a.m.

After the safety class, expert help is available for anyone who needs it throughout their projects, from start to finish.

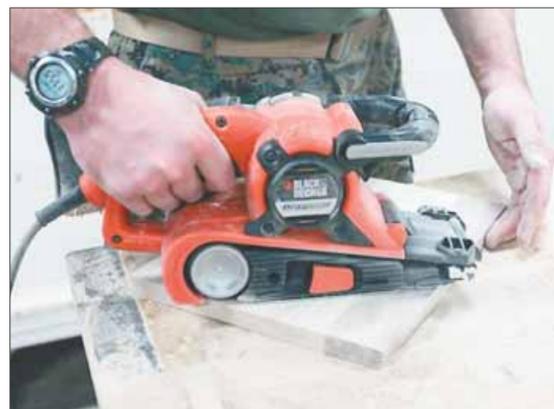
"I have two assistants, plus myself, and we will sit down from the start, and if they have an idea, we will



Robert Henry, a recreation assistant with the Wood Hobby Shop, gives two new patrons a safety class Wednesday.



The Wood Hobby Shop's front desk contains sample crafts and books for people to gain inspiration for projects.



The Wood Hobby Shop offers many different tools for carpenters to create and refinish furniture and other wooden pieces.

See **HOBBY, B4**

Basketball season an 'easy drive' for players ... so far



CPL. M. C. NERL

Sean Young [23], a point guard with 3rd Bn., 12th Marines, lays it up for a score Wednesday during a game against the Rhinos. Young and 3/12 ended up losing 45 - 44.

See more photos on page B3



Combat Center Clubs

Excursions Enlisted Club

Fridays: Social food, 5 to 7 p.m.; Salsa dancing, 7 to 8 p.m.; Ladies' night, 8 to 10 p.m.; DJ Vlad, 8 to 11 p.m.
Saturdays: Variety Night with DJ Gjettblaque
Wednesdays: DJ Gjettblaque, 8 to 10 p.m.

Bloodstripes NCO Club

Monday: Chicken nuggets and nachos
Wednesdays: Italian sausage with peppers & onions, green salad, 5:30 to 7:30 p.m.
Thursday: Free salsa lessons

Hashmarks 29 SNCO Club

Fridays: Dinner, full menu, 4:30 to 9 p.m., Social hour 5:30 p.m., DJ, 8 p.m. to 1 a.m.
Mondays: Steak night and full dinner menu
Monday-Friday: All Hands Lunch, 10:30 a.m. to 1:30 p.m.
Wednesdays: Dinner, full menu, 4:30 to 9 p.m., Karaoke, 5 to 7 p.m.

Combat Center's Officers' Club

Monday: Valentine's Day Dinner, 5:30 to 8:30 p.m.
Monday-Friday: Lunch served, from 11 a.m. to 1 p.m.
Taco Thursdays: 5 to 7 p.m.

For complete calendars visit <http://www.mccs29palms.com>.

Local Events

Pappy and Harriet's Weekend Line-Up:

Free show with Wil Cope and Romany Rye

Description: The American folk music band performs
When: 8 p.m., Friday, Feb. 11

Olin and the Moon

Description: The Indie rock/folk band performs

When: 8 p.m., Saturday, Feb. 12
Where: 53688 Pioneertown Road, Pioneertown
For more information, call 365-5956 or visit <http://www.pappyandharriets.com>.

Willie Boy's Weekend Line-Up:

Edison, Edison

When: 9 p.m., Friday, Feb. 11

Southern Spirit

Description: A country band from Knoxville, Tenn.

When: 9 p.m., Saturday, Feb. 12
Where: 53688 Pioneertown Road, Pioneertown
For more information, call 365-5956 or visit <http://www.pappyandharriets.com>.

Last chance for "Come Blow Your Horn"

Description: The popular Neil Simon comedy

When: 7 p.m., Friday and Saturday, Feb. 11 and 12

Where: Theatre 29
73637 Sullivan Road, Twentynine Palms
For more information call 361-4151 or visit <http://www.theatre29.com>.

Pulitzer winning play, W;t offered at Groves

Description: Margaret Edson's Pulitzer winning drama

When: 8 p.m. on Friday and Saturday, 2:30 p.m. on

Sundays through March 11.

Where: Groves Cabin Theatre
8768 Desert Willow Trail, Morongo Valley
For more information call 365-4523 or visit <http://www.grovescabintheatre.org>.

Lower Desert

The Oakridge Boys

Description: The comedian/ventrilloquist performs

When: 8 p.m., Saturday, Feb. 12
Where: Spotlight 29 Casino Resort
46-200 Harrison Place, Coachella
For more information call 866-377-6829 or visit <http://www.spotlight29.com>.

Huey Lewis and the News

Description: The famous rock band performs their hits

When: 7 p.m., Sunday, March 13
Where: Morongo Casino Resort and Spa
49500 Seminole Drive, Cabazon
For more information call 800-252-4499 or visit <http://www.morongocasinoresort.com>.

Lionel Richie

Description: The pop icon performs his hits

When: 8 p.m., Saturday, Feb. 19
Where: Fantasy Springs Resort Casino
84-245 Indio Springs Parkway, Indio
For more information call 800-827-2946 or visit <http://www.fantasyspringsresort.com>.

Sunset Cinema

Friday, Feb. 11

6 p.m. – Gulliver's Travels, Rated PG
9 p.m. – How Do You Know, Rated PG-13
Midnight – The Fighter, Rated R

Saturday, Feb. 12

11 a.m. – Free matinee: G-Force, Rated PG
2 p.m. – Yogi Bear, Rated PG
6 p.m. – Tron Legacy, Rated PG
9 p.m. – Season of the Witch, Rated PG-13
Midnight – Little Fockers, Rated PG-13

Sunday, Feb. 13

2 p.m. – Megamind, Rated PG
6 p.m. – Gulliver's Travels, Rated PG
9 p.m. – The Fighter, Rated R

Monday, Feb. 14

7 p.m. – How Do You Know, PG-13

Tuesday, Feb. 15

7 p.m. – Yogi Bear, Rated PG

Wednesday, Feb. 16

7 p.m. – Free comedy show

Thursday, Feb. 17

7 p.m. – Tron Legacy, Rated PG



COURTESY PHOTO

Colin O'Donoghue plays Michael Kovack, a conflicted young Catholic priest who becomes an apprentice exorcist, schooled by an older man of the cloth. Anthony Hopkins plays a priest who counsels him in the ways of dealing with the devil.

'The Rite' fails to scare up real chills

NEIL POND

AMERICAN PROFILE

"The Rite"

Rated PG-13

A conflicted young Catholic priest becomes an apprentice exorcist, schooled by an older man of the cloth who

counsels him in the ways of dealing with the devil.

Sound familiar? It should, if you've ever seen "The Exorcist," which totally freaked out audiences back in 1973. Ever since, Hollywood has been repeatedly trying to serve up something satanically similar

to scare successive generations silly – and create around-the-block lines of holy box-office gold.

This new devil-made-me-do-it thriller was supposedly "inspired" by a 2009 book, "The Making of a Modern Exorcist," that detailed the experiences of a real-life priest who assisted in more than 20 church-sanctioned rituals.

The movie's got a big star, Anthony Hopkins, as the older, experienced exorcist. It's got some gorgeous-

ly creepy cinematography. The opening scene of a body being prepped for burial sets an early, ominous tone, one in which you're just waiting for something to bump or thump or jump up and go "Boo!"

It's got a writhing, hissing, pregnant teen, a brood of foreboding cats, a demonic-looking, red-eyed mule and a scene that gives a new meaning to projectile vomiting.

And it confronts, head-on, the contemporary scientific skepticism that surrounds the age-old religious belief in demons and the modern church's use of both ancient ritual and contemporary technology – like when an exorcism is interrupted by the ringing of the priest's cell phone.

But the movie just isn't very scary, certainly not to any audience member even passingly familiar with its now-old-hat tricks and reasonably primed to expect a level of state-of-the-arts special effects that "The Rite" never comes close to delivering.

As young priest Michael Kovack, Colin O'Donoghue drifts through the movie without leaving much of any kind of impression. Hopkins, as Father Trevant, veers off in the movie's climax to a monologue that seems channeled from Hannibal Lector, the character he played with such memorable menace in "Silence of the Lambs."

It doesn't help sustain the requisite atmosphere of horrific gloom and soul-stealing doom when Father Trevant approaches his job, more or less, like a weary pest-control specialist worn down by years and years of driving off a persistent cockroach that just keeps crawling back.

The movie's turn in its last half toward a big-finish showdown between good and evil isn't near the shocking surprise it could have been. If you've seen the preview, you'll be looking for the devil in the details long before his dark highness finally shows up.

When it's all over, O'Donoghue's character trades his cynicism for faith. Most moviegoers, however, will remain skeptical about at least one thing: that Hollywood will ever find a way to get out from under the devilishly long shadow of "The Exorcist."

Combat Center Sports



CPL. M. C. NERL

David Carter, a player with the Rhinos, shoots a free throw Wednesday during a game against 3/12. The Rhinos won with a score of 45 – 44.



CPL. M. C. NERL

Josh Moore, a small forward with 3rd Bn., 12th Marines, searches the court for an open teammate Wednesday during their game against the Rhinos. The Rhinos won in the final seconds with a score of 45 – 44.



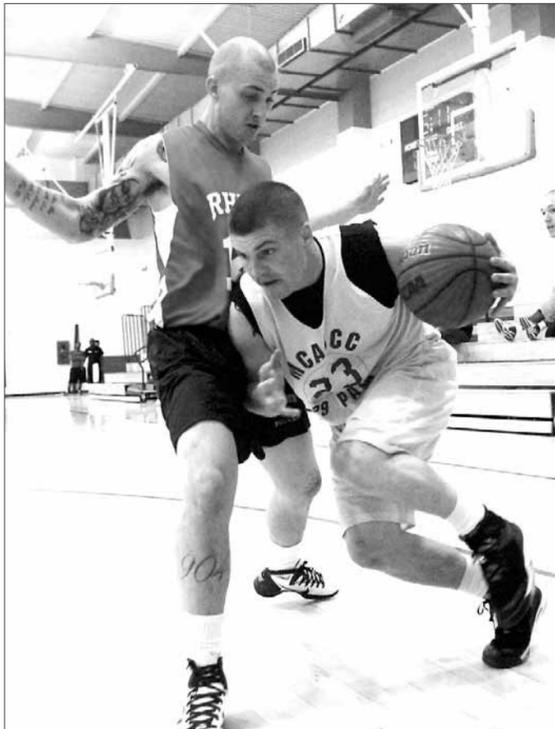
CPL. M. C. NERL

Sean Young, a point guard with 3rd Bn., 12th Marines, searches the court for an open teammate Wednesday during their game against the Rhinos. 3/12 went on to lose 45 – 44.

Athlete of the Week



Name: Sean Young
Hometown: Philadelphia
Unit: Battery L, 3rd Battalion, 12th Marine Regiment
Job title: Cannoneer
Recognition: Played outstanding in game against Marine Wing Support Squadron 374 Rhinos
Favorite aspect of the sport: "Winning"
Advice for aspiring players: "Say no to spice."



CPL. M. C. NERL

Sean Young, a point guard with 3rd Bn., 12th Marines, drives into the paint Wednesday during their game against the Rhinos. 3/12 lost in the final seconds 45 – 44.



CPL. M. C. NERL

Josh Moore, a small forward with 3rd Bn., 12th Marines, tries to block a player with the Rhinos' pass Wednesday during their game at the Combat Center's East Gym Fitness Center. 3/12 lost with a score of 45 to 44.

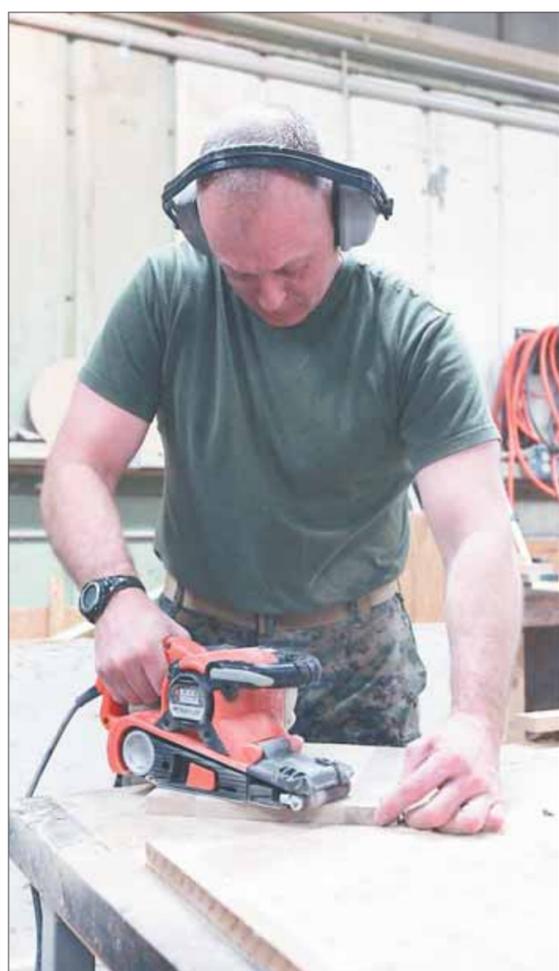
Did you know?



If you are active duty, retired military or a family member, you can place a FREE ad in our

Combat Center Trader Ads

See page 9 for details and limitations



LANCE CPL. ANDREW D. THORBURN

Lieutenant Col. Jeffery Johnson, the executive officer for Mojave Viper Support Division, uses a belt sander before applying the finish to a furniture project at the Wood Hobby Shop Wednesday.



LANCE CPL. ANDREW D. THORBURN

Patrons of the Wood Hobby Shop work on their projects and wait for the bi-weekly safety class at the Wood Hobby Shop Wednesday.



LANCE CPL. ANDREW D. THORBURN

Robert Henry, a recreation assistant with the Wood Hobby Shop, helps Staff Sgt. Kurtis Adams, a student with Company A, Marine Corps Communication-Electronics School, with his project at the Wood Hobby Shop Wednesday.

HOBBY, from B1

start putting it on the paper and coming up with the dimensions for it," Miller said. "With the Internet now, we get some of the guys who can direct them to some of the different sites, and they can look at different types of tables. They like this idea for this one and this idea for this one, and we can come up with something that is unique to them. And needless to say since they are building it themselves, we can scale the

height to what they want. The Wood hobby Shop is open Wednesday through Friday, 11 a.m. to 7 p.m. and Saturday and Sunday 10 a.m. to 6 p.m. Wood is available for purchase in many varieties with the price on the individual cuts. They also provide finishes available for purchase for the wood though patrons can bring in their own finishes with the material data sheets. For more information on the Wood Hobby Shop visit <http://www.mccs29palms.com> or call 830-7214.