

Marine honored for 30 years of service, page A6

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BLT 2/7 arrives at Freshwater Beach, page A3

OBSERVATION POST

MCAGCC TWENTYNINE PALMS

July 22, 2011

Since 1957

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SGT. HEATHER GOLDEN

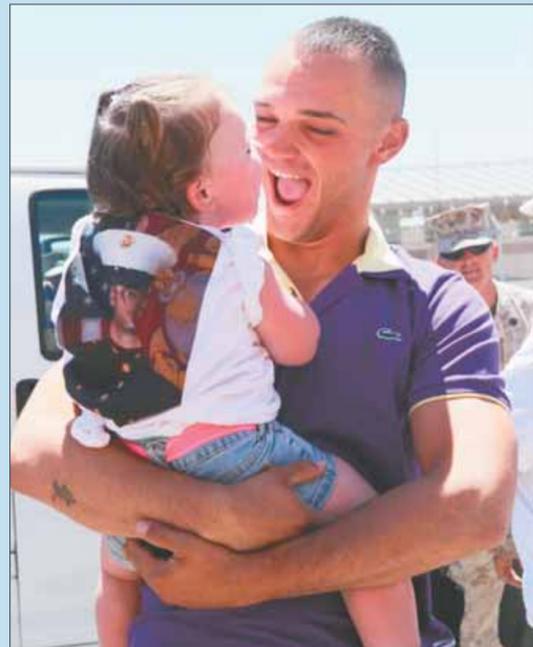
Sgt. RV Maggitt, a tank gunner with Company D, 1st Tank Battalion, stands his ground as he is tackled by his wife, Myesha and 4-year-old daughter, Jayden, upon his return home from Afghanistan Wednesday. His 6-year-old daughter, Justice, joined in the family's group hug a few moments later.

1st Tanks ADVON returns



EMILY ANDERSON

Petty Officer 2nd Class Raphael Holthaus, a corpsman with Company D, 1st Tank Battalion, is greeted by his wife, Rachel, and son, Jonah, upon his return home from Afghanistan Wednesday. These Co. D returnees were part of the advance party. The main body is expected to return later this month.



SGT. HEATHER GOLDEN

Lance Cpl. Robert Racicot, an armorer with Company D, 1st Tank Battalion, greets his 1-and-a-half-year-old daughter, Jaylyn, with a big smile seconds after exiting the van that brought him home during the unit's return from Afghanistan Wednesday.

US, allies link up in cyber space

LANCE CPL. SARAH DIETZ
COMBAT CORRESPONDENT

Representatives from the U.S. military, and the militaries of several allies, took a cue from today's generation of gamers with an online virtual exercise Tuesday.

The Allied Auroras exercise gave the forces, which included the U.S. Marine Corps, U.S. Army, Canada, Britain, Australia and New Zealand, the opportunity to connect virtually using state of the art simulations systems. It also helped show how the nations would work together using this type of virtual connection to control a real life battlefield.

Much like an online multiplayer version of the board game Risk, each nation had their own virtual military displayed onscreen. From opposite sides of the globe, the staff officers of each military communicated with the other nations and worked through virtual threats, such



LANCE CPL. SARAH DIETZ

Major John Ruffini, a future plans officer, looks at a teleconference between multiple leaders from the U.S., Britain, Australia, Canada and New Zealand during the Allied Auroras exercise Tuesday at the Combat Center's Simulation Center.

as improvised explosive devices, terrorist engagements or learning how to coexist with local nationals in a combat environment.

The simulation is designed

for multiple training or mission rehearsal scenarios, it includes the VBS2, a 3-D interactive simulation which can be used internationally between the nations.

Each nation in the exercise controlled a battalion, forming a multinational brigade.

The U.S., Britain, Canada

See ALLIES, A6

I MEF, MCIWEST Mexico travel policy updated

SGT. HEATHER GOLDEN
EDITOR / PRESS CHIEF

The policy outlining travel to Mexico for service members within the I Marine Expeditionary Force and Marine Corps Installations West, was updated June 13.

The policy was updated due to increased drug cartel violence and recent attacks on Americans.

"The Mexican government makes a considerable effort to protect U.S. citizens and other visitors to major tourist destinations," according to a message released by the Bureau of Consular Affairs. "Nevertheless, crime and violence are serious problems and can occur anywhere. While most victims of violence are Mexican citizens associated with criminal activity, the security situation poses serious risks for U.S. citizens as well."

In accordance with the U.S. Northern Command's protective directive 11-118, all

leave and liberty travel to the Mexican states of Michoacan, Tamaulipas, Chihuahua, Sinaloa, Durnago, Coahuila, Nuevo Leon, San Luis, Potosi, Zacatecas and Jalisco is restricted.

Official travel to any of these states is limited to mission essential only. These travel plans must also be approved by the first general officer in the individual's chain of command.

The U.S. Army also released Force Protection Bulletin 11-003 Monday. This emergency message outlined increased threat levels in Chihuahua, and passed on information released by the U.S. Consulate in Ciudad Juarez July 15.

"Mexican authorities have captured key members of the cartels active in Juarez," as stated in the Consulate's message to U.S. citizens visiting and residing in the state.

These successes also bring

See MEXICO, A7

'Cannoneers' welcome new commanding officer

DIANE DURDEN
PUBLIC AFFAIRS SPECIALIST

The sun shone brightly in the desert sky as the Marines and sailors of 3rd Battalion, 11th Marine Regiment, marched onto Lance Cpl. Torrey L.

Gray Field to welcome their new commander during a change of command ceremony July 13.

Lieutenant Col. Christopher Escamilla accepted command of the

See 3/11, A8



DIANE DURDEN

Lieutenant Col. Christopher Escamilla accepts the battalion colors from Lt. Col. Eduardo Abisellan during the 3rd Battalion, 11th Marine Regiment, change of command ceremony at Lance Cpl. Torrey L. Gray Field July 13. The exchange of the battalion's colors signifies the shift in command from one Marine to the other.



DIANE DURDEN

The company guidon bearers present the company guidons during the "officers center" element of 3rd Battalion, 11th Marine Regiment, change of command ceremony at Lance Cpl. Torrey L. Gray Field July 13. During the ceremony, Lt. Col. Eduardo Abisellan relinquished command to Lt. Col. Christopher Escamilla.

Little known TRICARE benefits

SHARON FOSTER

TRICARE MANAGEMENT ACTIVITY

TRICARE offers comprehensive, affordable health coverage to more than 9.6 million eligible beneficiaries worldwide. It is an enormous military health benefits system.

Because of its complexity, many beneficiaries may be unsure of all the benefits and programs available to them. TRICARE has decided to highlight several well-known, and a few not-so-well-known benefits.

Electronic explanation of benefits

TRICARE beneficiaries can sign up and receive an explanation of benefits electronically and eliminate the cost and clutter of paper EOBs. A TRICARE EOB is an itemized statement that shows what action TRICARE has taken on a beneficiary's claim. The benefits of using electronic EOBs include:

- Security: The number-one form of identity theft is through physical mail.
- Convenience: Access to the website is 24 hours a day, seven days a week.
- Speed: Beneficiaries no longer have to wait for mail delivery.
- Storage: Eliminate clutter. Four years of electronic EOBs are kept on file.
- Environment: Electronic EOBs save trees and reduce carbon emissions.

Beneficiaries can sign up to receive EOBs by going to <http://www.myTRICARE.com>. Log into myTRICARE Secure by clicking the "Secure Sign-In" button. When the myTRICARE Secure home page appears on the left side of the home page, click the "Select Your EOB Preferences" button. Under the "Would you like to check your EOBs online rather than receive them in the mail?" question, click "Yes." Click the "Submit" button at the bottom of the page.

TRR sign-up options expanded

Since Sept. 1, 2010, members of the Retired Reserve who aren't 60, the so-called "gray area" retirees, have been able to purchase TRICARE Retired Reserve to provide health coverage for themselves and their eligible family members. To make purchasing TRR easier, gray area retirees can now get a DS Logon by contacting the Defense Enrollment Eligibility Reporting System/Defense Manpower Data Center Support Office and remotely verify their identity.

Gray area retirees can use the DS Logon to access the Web-based Reserve Component Purchased TRICARE Application to qualify for and purchase TRR. If a gray area retiree doesn't have a DS Logon, but has a retired military ID card, he or she can call the DSO at 1-800-538-9552 (1-866-363-2883 for the hearing impaired) to request remote proofing documentation. The DSO will provide step-by-step instructions and the appropriate documentation to get a DS Logon via remote proofing. For instructions on how to qualify for and purchase TRR go to <http://www.tricare.mil/trr>.

Well-Child Care: No co-pays or cost-shares

Keeping toddlers healthy is a big responsibility and TRICARE is here to help. TRICARE provides well-child care for eligible children from birth to age 6. For well-child care, there are no copayments or cost-shares. The well-child benefit includes routine newborn care, comprehensive health-promotion and disease-prevention exams, vision and hearing screenings, routine immunizations and developmental assessments. To learn more about well-child benefit, visit <http://www.tricare.mil/baby>.

Hospice care, zero deductible

Hospice care is a zero-deductible benefit for all TRICARE beneficiaries. It gives TRICARE beneficiaries access to personal care and home health aide assistance. It initially provides two 90-day periods of care, followed by an unlimited number of 60-day periods. Each period requires prior authorization from the beneficiary's regional health care contractor.

Not all care is covered by the hospice benefit. Individual hospices may charge for some items, such as outpatient medications or inpatient respite care. Charges for medical care not related to the terminal illness fall under the beneficiary's basic TRICARE benefit. For more information about the hospice benefit, beneficiaries can contact their regional health care contractor or their TRICARE Area Office at <http://www.tricare.mil/contactus>.

Beneficiaries can view a list of covered TRICARE services on TRICARE's website, <http://www.tricare.mil/mybenefit/home/medical/isitcovered>. They can also contact their regional health care contractor for more information.

Hot Topics

MILITARY SPOUSE APPRECIATION ESSAY CONTEST

Tell us why you appreciate your military spouse, and be entered for a chance to win a two-night stay at Gone South Vacation Rentals. Essays must be 500 words or less, and are due by Aug. 19. The contest is open to all Twentynine Palms-stationed active duty service members, and deployed members are also encouraged to participate. One winning essay will be chosen from each of the following categories: officer, staff noncommissioned officer, noncommissioned officer and private-lance corporal. Essays can be sent to londia.mcclain@usmc.mil. When submitting, include name, rank, unit, mailing address, home phone number, e-mail address and spouse's name. Once essays are judged, winners will be notified by phone or e-mail. For more information, call 830-3110.

FOOTBALL COMPETITION

The Commanding General's Intramural Football League season begins Aug. 29, and ends Dec.10. Entry deadline for teams will be Aug. 5. There is a mandatory coaches meeting July 20 and Aug. 10 at 10 a.m. in building 1341. All active duty members and their families, DOD employees and civilian contractors of at least 18 years of age are eligible to play. Team sizes are limited to 40 players and two coaches with an unlimited roster. Games will be Mondays and Wednesdays, 6 to 8 p.m. at Felix Field. For more information, call 830-4092.

MARINE POOL PARTY

All active duty service members are invited to a summer pool party at the Training Tank from 6-10 p.m. today. There will be a DJ, food, prizes and beer, for those of age with ID. No outside alcohol or pets allowed. Call 830-5086 for more information.

Marine Corps History

July 24, 1944

The V Amphibious Corps, commanded by Maj. Gen. Harry Schmidt, landed on Tinian, in the Mariana Islands. The following morning, the 2nd and 4th Marine Divisions began a shoulder-to-shoulder southward sweep of the island. Organized enemy resistance faded within a week, and on Aug. 1, Maj. Gen Schmidt declared the island secure.



Immediately report any suspicious activity 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



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

SUDOKU #2243

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CROSSWORD AND SUDOKU PUZZLES COURTESY OF © 2011 HOMETOWN CONTENT

Combat Center Spotlight

Name: Pfc. Joseph Robinson
Hometown: Williamsville, N.Y.
Unit: Headquarters Company, 7th Marine Regiment.
Job title: Small arms repairman.

Job duties: Responsible for the accountability and maintenance of more than 500 weapons within the regimental headquarters armory.

What is your favorite aspect of your job?:

"Working with weapons. When I joined the Marine Corps, I wanted to be infantry because I wanted to shoot weapons. Working on them is a different skill set. There's a lot more to it than just pointing and shooting the weapon."

What is your least favorite aspect of your job?:

"Coming in at [3 a.m.] to open the armory to issue weapons to Marines going to the range."

Hobbies: "Skateboarding. It's always been my dream to move to California to skate. I also like playing football and golfing."

Time at Combat Center: Less than one year.

What is an interesting fact about yourself that most people don't know?: "I think I have OCD. You can tell by the way I set things up. Everything has to be in its place."



DIANE DURDEN

OBSERVATION POST

Commanding General Brig. Gen. George W. Smith Jr.

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HART AND SOLE

[Puzzle solutions on A6]

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ACROSS

1. Place for a cup of joe
5. Stretch of land
10. Monk's hood
14. Small brook
15. "One of Ours" novelist Cather
16. They try harder
17. Boer's migration
18. More slippery
19. Dweeb
20. HART
23. Audiophile's stack
24. Singer Sumac
25. Granny Smith, for one
28. Speaker systems, for short
31. Feeling for Woody Allen
35. SOLE
38. All right, informally
39. Mary's follower
40. Rock bottom
41. The Shirelles' "___ Him on a Sunday"
42. Wolfed down
43. HART
45. Puccini heroine
47. Med. specialty
48. Vital vessel
49. Like some lots and socks
51. Have the blahs
52. SOLE
59. Inside info
60. "All in the Family" spin-off
61. Gung-ho feeling
63. Jacob's twin
64. Invite to enter
65. "Or" follower
66. High-energy snack mix
67. Quickie Halloween costume
68. Did in

DOWN

1. Obsolescent PC hookup
2. Suffix for the well-to-do
3. Show off one's bod
4. Fraternal bunch
5. Doublemint hucksters
6. Costa ___
7. Touched down
8. "Pinocchio" goldfish
9. Procrastinate
10. The Promised Land
11. [see other side]
12. Like an Airedale's coat
13. Letters for Leary
21. First place?
22. Fed
25. Black key
26. Aristotle's teacher
27. 25-Acrosses, pears, et al.
28. Portraitists' family name
29. "Our Miss Brooks" actress
30. Sidestep
32. Pal of Andy and Barney
33. Airborne targets
34. Aquarium dweller
36. Kind of "finger printing"
37. Ill temper
41. Places on a pedestal
43. Whipped up
44. Roaster's spot
46. Keep confined
50. Creator of Athos and Aramis
51. "You ___ kidding!"
52. Eliciting a shrug, perhaps
53. Icy coating
54. He rhymed "talcum" with "walcum"
55. Home of the Blue Devils
56. Emmy winner Falco
57. Secluded valley
58. Mitigate
59. Cribbage board insert
62. "Ben-Hur" author Wallace



An amphibious assault vehicle carrying elements of Company G., Battalion Landing Team 2nd Battalion, 7th Marine Regiment, 31st Marine Expeditionary Unit, charges onto Freshwater Beach Tuesday in an amphibious assault during Exercise Talisman Sabre 2011. TS11 provides an opportunity to conduct operations in a combined and joint environment that will increase both countries' bilateral war-fighting capabilities to respond to crises and provide humanitarian assistance. This exercise will increase interoperability, flexibility, and readiness, all of which are force multipliers in maintaining peace and stability in the Pacific.

31st MEU projects power from the sea at Freshwater Beach

**STORY AND PHOTOS
BY LANCE CPL.
GARRY J. WELCH**

31st MARINE EXPEDITIONARY UNIT

FRESHWATER BEACH, QUEENSLAND, Australia – As more than 15 amphibious assault vehicles charged out of the sea here Tuesday, Marines and sailors of Company G, Battalion Landing Team 2nd Battalion, 7th Marine Regiment, 31st Marine Expeditionary Unit, inside the vehicles prepared to spring into action.

Elements of the 31st MEU, in close cooperation with Australian Defence Forces, conducted a mock amphibious assault on Freshwater Beach, in Queensland, Australia, July 19 as part of Exercise Talisman Sabre 2011.

From the first amphibious assault on March 3, 1776, in New Providence, the Bahamas, to the landing in Inchon, Korea, the Marine Corps has perfected its amphibious doctrine and continues to prove its worth time and time again.

During the invasion of Iraq in 2003, the Marine Corps was prepared to conduct an opposed amphibious landing, but the force was instead utilized as a bluff.

Due to the well-known amphibious capabilities of the Corps, the bluff proved

to be a major contributing factor in the invasion's success by drawing the attention of Iraqi forces to defend the coastline.

The Marine Corps continues to provide America with this unique amphibious capability. Today it was demonstrated with approximately 350 Marines and sailors of the 31st MEU as they departed the dock landing ship USS Germantown (LSD 42) in the early hours of the morning and headed for the Australian coastline.

"It is quite a rush to be in the tracks [AAVs]," said Pfc. Dominic Hanson. "You are in complete darkness inside, and you can feel the vehicle hits the beach and come ashore. The ramp comes down and you go from darkness to bright light - it is quite an adrenalin rush."

The Marines jumped out of their vehicles, set a defensive perimeter, and then quickly moved up into the thick Australian bush to find the enemy.

"Today we are securing a beachhead here, and next we are going to push inland and seize an airfield," said 1st Lt. Sean Dixon, weapons platoon commander, Company G, BLT 2/7, 31st MEU. "The assault is going well thus far, we have not encountered any opposing forces so



far but are well prepared if we do." As the beach was found to be clear of enemy activity, three U.S. Navy landing craft, air cushioned, roared ashore and unloaded additional security and logistics elements of the MEU. Marines, sailors and vehicles with Combat Logistics Battalion 31 and combined anti-armor teams quickly followed in trace of the lead elements.

During the assault, the Marines and sailors executed actions they had been practicing for quite some time, and many of their skills will help them during a future Afghanistan deployment, said Dixon. "We've also been

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See BEACH, A8



A Marine with Company G, Battalion Landing Team 2nd Battalion, 7th Marine Regiment, 31st Marine Expeditionary Unit, secures Freshwater Beach during the amphibious assault in support of Exercise Talisman Sabre 2011.

SJA CORNER

The Survivor Benefit Plan

**CAPT. SHANNON
MAWSON**

LEGAL ASSISTANCE OFFICER

It is common knowledge that death ends pension payments and retirement checks. What does this mean for your family? It means that they cannot receive your retirement pay if you pass away.

The Survivor Benefit Plan is a government program that pays a specified income at stated intervals for the recipient's life, which allows retired service members or those active duty members eligible for retirement to provide continued income to certain beneficiaries at the time of the service member's death.

The premium payments for SBP are taken out of a service member's retirement check, thus reducing the amount of his retired pay and not included as income for tax purposes. The SBP is also partly subsidized by the government.

The service member will decide what benefit amount will apply and to who the benefit is paid. A service member may want to provide coverage for a former spouse or an "insurable interest" like

business partner or parent. This makes the SBP a great estate planning tool.

In general, the designated survivor will receive a lifetime annuity for 55 percent of the service member's retired pay. The service member has the option of selecting coverage for a spouse, coverage for the spouse and qualifying children or coverage for qualifying children only.

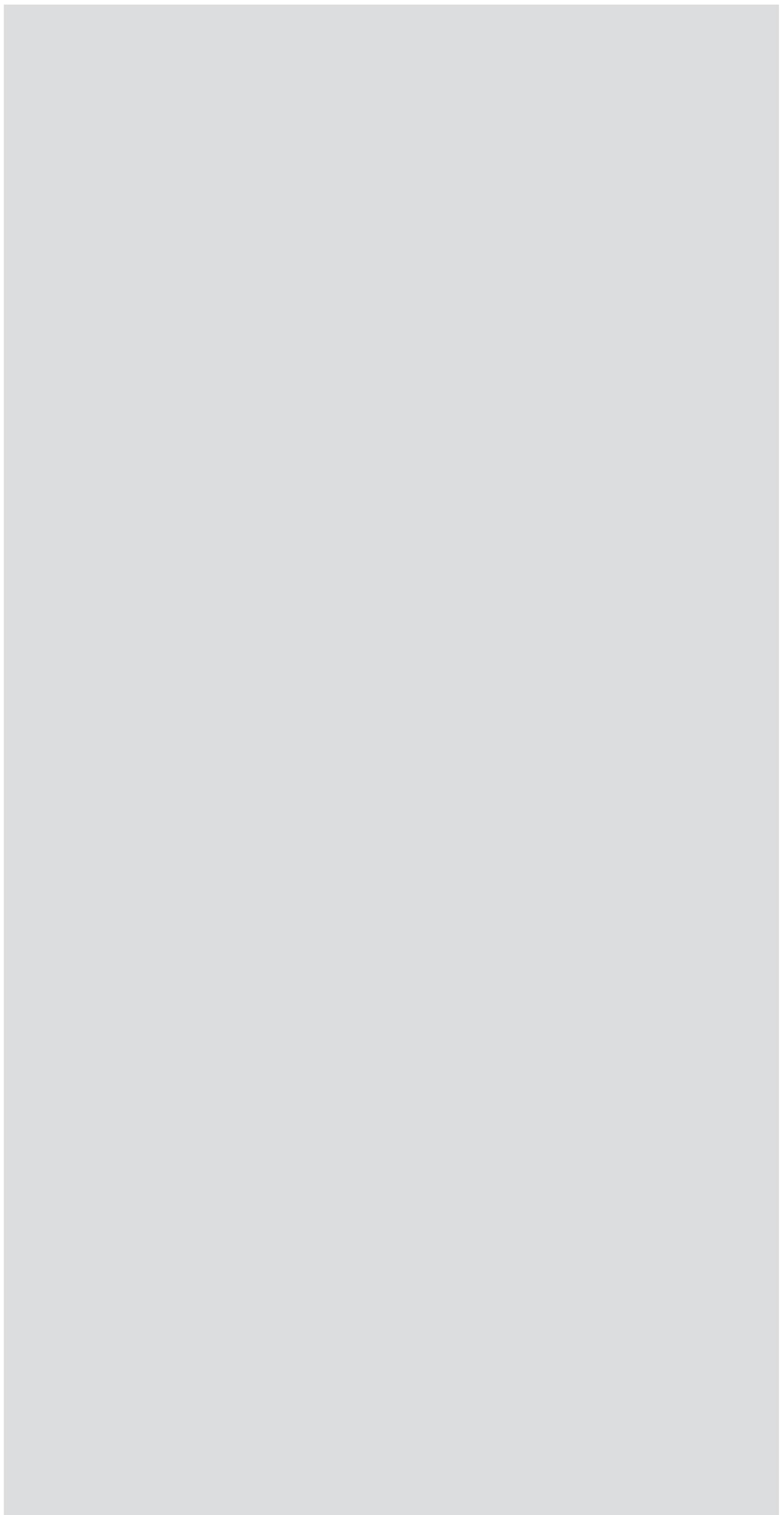
The cost for SBP depends on the type of coverage selected and the base amount chosen. The base amount may be any amount between \$300 and the full amount of the service member's monthly retired pay.

In the past, a beneficiary could not collect social security and SBP because the amount of social security was offset from the monthly SBP annuity payment.

The 2005 National Defense Authorization Act phased this out and it was completely eliminated in 2008. There also is an SBP available for the reserve component.

If a service member or his or her family has questions about the SBP, they can make an appointment with a legal assistance officer at 830-6111.





Javelin Thrust Marines receive warm welcome at Reno airport

CPL. ANDREW THORBURN

COMBAT CORRESPONDENT

MARINE CORPS MOUNTAIN WARFARE TRAINING CENTER BRIDGEPORT, Calif. – Volunteers from the Nevada Military Support Alliance provided a warm welcome to thousands of Marines and sailors at the Reno International Airport July 17.

Every year, thousands of Marines and sailors travel to Marine Corps Mountain Warfare Training Center in Bridgeport, Calif., Hawthorne Army Weapons Depot in Hawthorne, Nev., and Marine Corps Air Station Yuma, in Yuma, Ariz., to support Operation Javelin Thrust, the largest training exercise in the Marine Corps Reserve.

As the Marines and sailors arrived in Reno to await further travel to their training areas, the NMSA made sure they waited in style. The NMSA and the local community donated their time and efforts to provide incoming service members with popcorn, bottled water, soda, cable TV, Internet access, snacks, DVDs, a small library, board games and video games.

“Everything was donated by the community so the food, books and bottles of water come at no cost to the Marine Corps,” said Master Sgt. Clinton Williams, the movement coordinator for the exer-



CPL. ANDREW D. THORBURN

Lance Cpl. Matthew Pfeil, a network operator with Communications Company, Headquarters and Service Battalion, 4th Marine Logistics Group, checks out a “hot rod” brought in for the service members to view by local business owners at the Reno-Tahoe International Airport July 17.

cise. “Last year all we had were boxes of Meals, Ready to Eat and bottles of water for the Marines and sailors but now when the Marines walk in they are impressed with everything available,” Williams said.

It was for the men and women in uniform that the NMSA volunteers and local community continue to donate their time and energy. “It is very gratifying,” said Penny Estrada, a volunteer with the NMSA. “The Marines are grateful

for the support here. They are all pleasant to the volunteers and shocked at all we have available.”

A local business also chipped in to help the Marines. Charlie Carter, the owner of an auto body shop brought out a static display of “hotrods” and allowed the Marines to take pictures in the vehicles.

“They are out there making the ultimate sacrifice, and if the only way I can support them is letting them sit in my car, then it is more than worth it,” Carter said.



CPL. ANDREW D. THORBURN

Marines enroute to Operations Javelin Thrust relax and enjoy the amenities available at the Reno-Tahoe International Airport July 17.



CPL. ANDREW D. THORBURN

The volunteers with the Nevada Military Support Alliance keep fresh snacks available for the service members heading to Operation Javelin Thrust July 17.



LANCE CPL. SARAH DIETZ

Majors Ben Brown and John Ruffini observe activity onscreen during the Allied Auroras exercise at the Simulation Center Tuesday.

ALLIES, from A1

and Australia have conducted biannual exercises similar to this before, but this is the first time the Marine Corps has participated in an America, Britain, Canada, Australia project, said Maj. Ben Brown, the simulations officer for the Combat Center.

"This is not a training exercise, this is a test to see if [the virtual coalition] environment and setup work as a way to set up the stage for future exercises," Brown said. "This is a simulation we've never used. [In the simulation] every single individual

on the battlefield is represented [by a blue dot on the screen]. This is a much higher resolution simulation than what we would use for this type of thing typically."

In order to better understand and work efficiently with its allies, the U.S. military must become familiar with the same electronic systems they use.

"[Working with this system] is so important because this is what the other nations have," Brown said. "If we are going to do stuff with these other nations, we have to figure out how to work in that environment. Also, anytime

you work with coalition partners you build a relationship where they recognize who the Marine Corps is and what we do."

For the other nations, this experience was beneficial and eye-opening to the ways other allies work.

"This is a great demonstration of interoperability," said Australian Army Lt. Col. Simon Bonavita, the Australian Army liaison officer for the Marine Corps. "We are facilitating a distributed simulation exercise like this fairly smoothly. Our lingo, apart from the accent, and the way we conduct operations is very similar. Any opportunity to build relationships is an outstanding opportunity."

Concerning the Corps' future operations, Allied Auroras is also a chance to look at networking possibilities between U.S. commands and services.

"There's a lot of benefit in this for us," Brown said. "We are interested in a concept of

30-year Marine bids Corps farewell



CPL. ANDREW D. THORBURN

Master Gunnery Sgt. Mark A. Redmond, formerly with Headquarters Battalion, was honored for his more than 30 years of service in the Marine Corps during his retirement ceremony at Lance Cpl. Torrey L. Gray Field July 15. Redmond spent his career in the supply field and said he loved his job and wouldn't have had it any other way. During the ceremony, Lt. Col Dean Steffen, his retiring officer, said his leadership and understanding of the job field greatly increased the productivity of the command. The Marine Corps had been good to him and he is sad to say goodbye, but he has to move on to the next stage of his life, Redmond said.

establishing a network in the Marine Corps, where the network will always be standing, and we are able to connect a simulation to it at any time. So watching how this network performs gives us insight on how we would design that network.

"If we had such a network for the Marine Corps, we would need it to be able to connect to other services and coalition partners; it gives us insight on how to connect external to the Marine Corps," he said.

Being the first time the Corps has participated in an ABCA exercise, it is unclear if they will continue to do so in the future, Brown said.

"The Marine Corps is testing the waters with this exercise," he said. "Pending those results and the input from



LANCE CPL. SARAH DIETZ

Colonel Mike Bodkin participates in a teleconference with leaders from multiple nations across the globe to test a new network system during the Allied Auroras exercise Tuesday.

Major Ruffini (a participant in the exercise) and me, the Marine Corps will determine

whether it is in the service's best interest to continue participation in future exercises."

CROSSWORD SOLUTIONS

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SUDOKU SOLUTIONS

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

BEACH, from A3

training for many different types of situations, and we are doing a deliberate assault today. We are supposed to deploy next fall, so this helps us focus on small unit leadership, the company landing team concept, and controlling our own area of operations."

The Australian Defence Forces viewing the Marines conducting the amphibious assault learned from the experience as well.

"This is a wonderful opportunity to train with one of our most important allies," said Australian Defence Force Brigadier Bob Brown, spokesman for the exercise. "There are many contingencies that we train for at Talisman Sabre, from high-end war-fighting all the way to peace enforcement and humanitarian assistance. The Marines are renowned for their ability to project power across the beach, and they have an enduring history in that regard."

As the Marines pushed forward toward their objectives, they maintained a high level of motivation and knew it wouldn't be long until they encountered the opposition forces.

"We've been out here for a few days getting ready digging fighting positions for our ambushes. Every time we get a warning, we all get up and get ready, everyone



LANCE CPL. GARRY J. WELCH

Amphibious assault vehicles carrying Company G, Battalion Landing Team 2nd Battalion, 7th Marine Regiment, 31st Marine Expeditionary Unit, secure Freshwater Beach in an amphibious assault during Exercise Talisman Sabre 2011. TS11 provides an opportunity to conduct operations in a combined and joint environment that will increase both countries' bilateral war-fighting capabilities to respond to crises and provide humanitarian assistance. This exercise will increase interoperability, flexibility and readiness, all of which are force multipliers in maintaining peace and stability in the Pacific.

is waiting to see what is coming," said Army 1st Lt. Joseph Shane, with the 2-23 Infantry Stryker Brigade based out of Fort Lewis, Wash., who is role-playing with the opposing force. "It sounds pretty mean from the reports coming in. I think we'll be able to hold our own for a little while, but it is not going to be easy. There would definitely be some degree of concern for anyone in our position who might be facing the Marines coming toward them from the beach."

TS11 is the largest joint military exercise undertaken by the Australian Defence

Force. Around 14,000 U.S. and 9,000 Australian personnel will participate.

This exercise provides an opportunity to conduct operations in a combined and joint environment that will increase both countries' bilateral war-fighting capabilities to respond to crises and provide humanitarian assistance. It will also increase interoperability, flexibility and readiness, all of which are force multipliers in maintaining peace and stability in the Pacific.

The 31st MEU is the only continuously forward-deployed MEU and remains the nation's force-in-readiness in the Asia-Pacific region.



LANCE CPL. GARRY J. WELCH

Marines with Company G, Battalion Landing Team 2nd Battalion, 7th Marine Regiment, 31st Marine Expeditionary Unit, secure Freshwater Beach during the amphibious assault in support of Exercise Talisman Sabre 2011.

3/11, from A1

battalion from Lt. Col. Eduardo Abisellan during the mid-morning ceremony.

It felt great to be home, said Escamilla, who most recently served as the chief, Policy Coordination Branch, Combined Forces Command/United Nations Command, in South Korea. This is the first time he has been stationed in Twentynine Palms.

"It's the tremendous welcome we've received from the battalion, both 7th and 11th Marine Regiments and the base community at large, that has already made Twentynine Palms, in a very short time frame, feel like home to us."

The friendship, the cohesive family environment and the camaraderie between the commands are just a few things Abisellan says he will miss about the Combat Center as he departs to attend the Brookings Institute in Washington, D.C.

"We're such a close-knit organization. They help one another. It's a wonderful atmosphere," he said.

Abisellan also had a few

words of advice for Escamilla as he begins to make his own mark on the battalion.

"Trust your [non-commissioned officers], empower them. Work on [staff non-commissioned officer] and lieutenant engagement at the lowest levels," he said. "Everything else will find its way."

For many years, Escamilla has admired the battalion's reputation and accomplishments, and looks forward to leading them.

"Its reputation has been built by a long line of Marines before us," he said. "You are tremendous stewards of this reputation, and I am honored and humbled to be the newest member of this battalion."

"We're going to strive to do what we have to do to support the 7th Marine Regiment," Escamilla added describing his leadership philosophy, one he said is not any different than any other Marine would have.

"We will take care of each other and do the right thing. We are going to seek to have balanced excellence," he said. "That's being the best we can in everything we do."



DIANE DURDEN

First Lt. Brandon Shields, battalion adjutant, takes his place on Lance Cpl. Torrey L. Gray Field during the 3rd Battalion, 11th Marine Regiment, change of command ceremony July 13. The adjutant's place on the field serves as a marker for the battalion to align with as they march onto the field.



DIANE DURDEN

The battalion marches past Lt. Col. Eduardo Abisellan [left], outgoing commander, and Lt. Col. Christopher Escamilla, incoming commander, during the "Pass in Review" element of the 3rd Battalion, 11th Marine Regiment, change of command ceremony at Lance Cpl. Torrey L. Gray Field July 13. "Pass in Review" provides the first opportunity for the new commander to review the battalion.



3rd CEB locks up championship

**STORY AND PHOTOS BY
 EMILY ANDERSON**

PUBLIC AFFAIRS INTERN

The Commanding General's Intramural Soccer League came to a close July 13 at Felix Field after 3rd CEB and HQBN battled it out for the championship title.

HQBN was the first to score, but 3rd CEB came back quickly and scored on a penalty kick to tie the game.

Tension was high as each team pulled out all the stops to gain the edge over their opponent, until the end of the second half when 3rd CEB scored two more goals, claiming triumph and ultimate bragging rights. At least until next season.

"The Marines worked hard for it, we practiced a lot throughout the season, and here we are. We overcame. We're the champions," said Angel Bargas, head coach of the 3rd CEB soccer team.

The victors lined up to

See CHAMPS, B3



Players from 3rd CEB walk back to the bench after taking their victory lap around the field. The players congratulate each other and laugh as they talk about their victory.



Misker Derseh, a player with 3rd CEB, celebrates his team's victory by rolling in ice that was dumped on his coach shortly after the Commanding General's Intramural Soccer League championship game at Felix Field July 13.



A player from 3rd CEB leaps to head the ball away from HQBN players.

Local artist beautifies new Combat Center barracks

LANCE CPL. SARAH DIETZ

COMBAT CORRESPONDENT

One local artist took advantage of a rare opportunity to show her support for America's troops in her own special way.

Claire Grow was browsing online for art supplies when she saw an ad by one of the construction companies contracted on-base asking for an artist to paint murals aboard the Combat Center.

"I looked in the arts and crafts section of twenty-ninepalmsyardsales.com, and I saw the ad," Grow said.

Going for an art major at California State University, Grow jumped on the opportunity to get in some more practice and give back to the troops.

"I was really intimidated at first," Grow said, a 19-year-old native of Twentynine Palms. "It's official, but it's going good, a lot better than I expected."

The murals of the Combat Center insignia are placed in the middle of the basketball courts of new barracks being built aboard the installation. Using grid technique, Grow free-hands the murals while still keeping them proportional.

Originally, Grow was tasked to paint one mural, but the staff at the construction site was so impressed with her work, they hired her to paint two more.

"She's been tremendous," said David Tropf, the project manager for the site from Straub-Martin-Harris. "She's a talented artist, we are extremely happy. We only hired her to do one, but she did such an exceptional job that we asked her to do all three."

In the future, Grow looks to pursue an art career, but not exactly through painting murals.

"I've always loved drawing. I'm pretty good at it," Grow added. "As of right now I want to become a cartoonist, or something with media."



Claire Grow, a 19-year-old art major with California State University, sits proudly by a freshly completed mural she painted of a Combat Center insignia June 13 in a construction site aboard the installation. Grow created three murals in the center of basketball courts near the new barracks. This was her contribution to beautifying the building.

EMILY ANDERSON



Combat Center Clubs

Excursions Enlisted Club

Friday: Social Hour with food, 5 to 7 p.m. followed by DJ Gjettblaque, 8 to 11 p.m., Ladies Night
Saturday: Variety Night, DJ Gjettblaque 8-11 p.m.

Bloodstripes NCO Club

Fridays: Social Hour with food, 5 to 7 p.m.
Monday: Free gourmet bar food, 5 to 7 p.m.
Wednesday: Free gourmet bar food, 5 to 7 p.m.
Thursday: Social Hour, 7 to 9 p.m.

Hashmarks 29 SNCO Club

Fridays: Dinner, full menu, 4:30 to 10:30 p.m., Social Hour, 5:30 to 7:30 p.m.
Monday: Steak night and full dinner menu 4:30 to 7:30 p.m.
Monday-Friday: All-Hands lunch, 10:30 a.m. to 1:30 p.m.
Thursday: Social Hour, 5 to 7 p.m.

Combat Center Officers' Club

Monday-Friday: All-hands lunch, from 11 a.m. to 1 p.m.
Monday: Steak night, 5 to 8 p.m.
Thursday: Taco Night, 5 to 7 p.m.

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

Local Events

Pappy and Harriet's Weekend Line-Up:

Jessica Lee Mayfield with Ferraby Lionheart
A cross between country and British invasion pop
When: 8 p.m., Friday, July 22
The Country
Psychedelic rock with a touch of country
When: 8 p.m., Saturday, July 23
Where: 53688 Pioneertown Road, Pioneertown
For more information, call 365-5956 or visit <http://www.pappyandharriets.com>.

Willie Boy's Weekend Line-Up:

Ghost Train followed by Club Willie's
The rock/country group are now Willie's regular band
When: 7 to 10 p.m., Friday, July 22
Ozzimania
The tribute band plays Black Sabbath/Ozzy Osbourne hits
When: 9 p.m., Saturday, July 23
Where: Willie Boy's Saloon and Dance Hall, 50048 Twentynine Palms Highway, Morongo Valley
For more information, call 363-3343 or visit <http://www.willieboys.com>.

Summer Movie in Luckie Park, "Megamind"

When: 8:30 p.m. Thursday, July 21
Where: Luckie Park near the corner of Utah Trail and Joe Davis Drive in Twentynine Palms on the north-facing wall of the racquetball courts.

"A Funny Thing Happened on the Way to the Forum"

Theatre 29 presents the famous comedic play
When: 7 p.m., Friday and Saturday, July 22 and 23
Where: Theatre 29
73637 Sullivan Road, Twentynine Palms
For more information call 361-4151 or visit <http://www.theatre29.com>.

Yucca Valley Summer Music Fest, Who's Your Daddy

The A Cappella foursome performs close harmonies
When: 7 p.m., Saturday, July 23
Where: Theatre 29
73637 Sullivan Road, Twentynine Palms
For more information call 361-4151 or visit <http://www.theatre29.com>

Lower Desert

Weezer

Alternative rock with a hint of punk
When: 8 p.m., Saturday, Aug. 27
Where: Fantasy Springs Resort Casino
84-245 Indio Springs Parkway, Indio
For more information call 800-827-2946 or visit <http://www.fantasyspringsresort.com>.

Miranda Lambert

The country music star performs
When: 7 p.m., Sunday, Aug. 21
Where: Agua Caliente
32-250 Bob Hope Drive, Rancho Mirage
For more information call 888-999-1995 or visit <http://hotwatercasino.com>.

Sunset Cinema

Friday, July 22

6 p.m. – Kung Fu Panda 2, Rated PG
9 p.m. – Judy Moody, Rated PG
Midnight – X-Men: First Class, Rated PG-13

Saturday, July 23

11 a.m. – **Free Matinee.** Pirates of the Caribbean 3, Rated PG-13
2 p.m. – Pirates of the Caribbean 4, Rated PG-13
6 p.m. – Priest, Rated PG-13
9 p.m. – The Conspirator, Rated PG-13
Midnight – Hangover 2, Rated R

Sunday, July 24

2 p.m. – Mr. Popper's Penguins, Rated PG
6 p.m. – X-Men: First Class, Rated PG-13
9 p.m. – Super 8, Rated PG-13

Monday, July 25

7 p.m. – Hangover 2, Rated R

Tuesday, July 26

7 p.m. – Kung Fu Panda 2, Rated PG

Wednesday, July 27

7 p.m. – Priest, Rated PG-13

Thursday, July 28

7 p.m. – Pirates of the Caribbean 4, Rated PG-13



COURTESY PHOTO

Kevin James plays a Dr. Doolittle-like zookeeper who gets tips from his beast buddies on how to get his dream girl.

Kevin James talks to animals in latest rom-com

NEIL POND

AMERICAN PROFILE

"Zookeeper"

Starring Kevin James, Rosario Dawson and Leslie Bibb
Rated PG-13

As the titled zookeeper in

this talk-to-the-animals comedy, Kevin James plays an unlucky-in-love schlub who gets tips from his best-bud beasts on how to get the girl of his dreams.

The animals are experts in the it's-a-jungle-out-there mating game.

Some of the suggestions are better than others. Strut and roar, say the bears. Separate her from the herd, advises the lion. Throw poop at her, recommends the monkey. Mark your territory, the wolf tells him, lifting his leg to urinate on a tree.

As with monkey poo or wolf pee, this whole movie bears the signature scent of Adam Sandler, who provides the voice of the monkey and is one of the film's ten producers. And director Frank Coraci is certainly attuned to Sandler's movie wavelength, having steered the comedian's previous yukfests "The Waterboy," "The Wedding Singer" and "Click."

The movie also holds true to another recurring Sandler theme, that of "hot" girls (in this case, two of them, played by Rosario Dawson and Leslie Bibb) falling for "average" guys.

Sandler's wife, Jackie, even makes an appearance, playing a waitress at TGI Friday's – which should have gotten its own producer credit, given the astronomical sum they surely paid for the fawning product placement the restaurant receives.

So if you're not an Adam Sandler fan, you probably won't find a lot to love about "Zookeeper," despite the inherent, loveable-lug likeability of its leading man. Kevin James, the former star of TV's "King of Queens," enthusiastically – and quite literally – throws himself into the role, enduring a battery of painful-looking, slapstick-y falls, smashes, thuds and thumps.

Donnie Wahlberg provides an unnecessarily dark subplot about a sadistic zoo employee, and Ken Jeong (from TV's "Community" and a hoot in both "Hangover" movies) plays a kinky, kooky reptile specialist.

The biggest stars, however, are never seen on screen. Listen to the chatter of the animals (who interact with a mostly seamless combination of live action and computer animation) and you'll hear some very familiar voices, including Nick Nolte (gorilla), Sylvester Stallone (lion), Cher (lioness), Don Rickles (frog) and Maya Rudolph (giraffe). Jon Favreau and Faizon Love get in some particularly clever lines as a pair of bickering bears.

"Zookeeper" provides a few chuckles, but little else, including any valuable animal advice. Heck, in that department, Mister Ed and his horse sense had it figured out 50 years ago.

Looking for the right job for you?



Check the Observation Post Classified section

CHAMPS, from B1

receive their trophy after much high-fiving and dumping a congratulatory cooler of ice water over Bargas' head.

Refusing to hang their heads in defeat, HQBN players gathered around 3rd CEB to offer their own words and gestures of praise.

The night ended with 3rd CEB taking a victory lap beneath the field lights.



EMILY ANDERSON

A player from 3rd CEB kicks the ball up the line during the Commanding General's Intramural Soccer League championship game July 13 at Felix Field.



EMILY ANDERSON

A player from 3rd CEB [left] pulls the ball back as players from HQBN rush in to steal possession during their Commanding General's Intramural Soccer League championship game July 13 at Felix Field.



EMILY ANDERSON

A player from 3rd CEB crashes the goal as the keeper tries to deflect the ball away.



EMILY ANDERSON

A player from 3rd CEB dribbles the ball away from an opposing player at Felix Field July 13.



EMILY ANDERSON

A player from 3rd CEB shields the ball from an HQBN player during their Commanding General's Intramural Soccer League championship game July 13 at Felix Field. The team defeated HQBN 3-1.

ADVERTISEMENT



EMILY ANDERSON

Players with team 3rd CEB line up to receive their trophy after winning the Commanding General's Intramural Soccer League championship.



EMILY ANDERSON

Nick Kwiatek, a player with the HQBN team, offers to help a fallen teammate after a collision in the goalie box.

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Athlete of the Week



EMILY ANDERSON

3rd CEB poses for a team photo before the Commanding General's Intramural Soccer League championship game July 13. The team defeated HQBN 3-1, claiming ultimate victory for the season. Athlete of the Week, Paul Stewart, is in the back row, fifth from the left. Stewart was selected by his coach as one of the team's overall top players for the team throughout the season.

Name: Paul Stewart

Hometown: Jacksonville, Fla.

Position: Forward

Team: 3rd CEB

Recognition for team: Winners of the Commanding General's Intramural Soccer League Championship.

What made you want to play the sport?: "I

haven't played soccer in a long time. I always coach my kids' teams, so I figured I would come out and start playing again."

Was it hard for you to come back after not playing for so long?: "A little bit because of conditioning. I play on a base basketball team, and the conditioning for that is different then when you're on a soccer field."



EMILY ANDERSON

Paul Stewart is a forward on team 3rd CEB, and was pointed out as one of the team's best players.