

OBSERVATION POST

MCAGCC TWENTYNINE PALMS

August 12, 2011

Since 1957

Vol. 54 Issue 32

Energy team wins federal energy award

PUBLIC AFFAIRS PRESS RELEASE

The Combat Center received the 2011 Federal Energy and Water Management Award for the installation's achievements in renewable energy generation as part of an awards initiative of the Federal Energy Management Program.

The program's awards recognize effective use of innovative technology, processes, and financial practices that institutionalize energy and water conservation within federal government organizations.

"The Combat Center continues to explore new ways to initiate strategies resulting in energy savings and utilization

of sustainable renewable energy sources," said Gary Morrissett, the utilities and

"With an emphasis on renewable energy, [the Combat Center] achieved 9.2 percent in renewable energy production."

— Gary Morrissett

energy manager for the Combat Center. The 2010 energy report stated that

the Combat Center's energy intensity was reduced by 28 percent from 2003 levels, and water intensity was reduced by 64 percent compared to 2007. The Combat Center also reduced energy consumption by over 15 percent and water consumption by over 61 percent compared to fiscal year 2009 levels. The total energy and water reductions saved \$1.1 million in 2010.

"Chilled water conversion, solar energy and Energy Management Control Systems contributed to the majority of these reductions," said Morrissett. "With

See ENERGY, A8

By the numbers:

- **28:** Percent the installation's energy intensity was reduced since 2007.
- **15:** Percent of reduced energy consumption since 2009.
- **61:** Percent of reduced water consumption since 2009.
- **\$1.1 million** - Dollars saved from energy and water consumption.

Facing the horizon



SGT. HEATHER GOLDEN

Lance Cpl. Randy Devore, a young rifleman with 3rd Battalion, 7th Marine Regiment, looks out over the Combat Center's Enhanced Mojave Viper training area Aug. 5. After a long day of training, Devore hunkered down in the shade against the HESCO barrier after he discovered his cell phone got just enough reception to send a text message home to his wife. Eight times a year, Marines come from around the Corps to participate in EMV, many of them in preparation for combat deployments. A typical EMV provides around 4,100 Marines and sailors with realistic training. The Combat Center is currently conducting its largest running of the exercise to date, at more than 5,000 people.



LANCE CPL. D. J. WU

Marines with 2nd Battalion, 11th Marine Regiment, patrol a simulated town in the Combat Center's training area during their Clear, Hold, Build training Aug. 9.

2/11 closes up Viper training

■ Camp Pendleton unit prepares for warfighting at Combat Center

LANCE CPL. D. J. WU

COMBAT CORRESPONDENT

Marines and sailors with Battery G, 2nd Battalion, 11th Marine Regiment, completed their provisional infantry training in the Combat Center's training area Aug. 9.

At the start of their exercise, the battery swept though, cleared and captured a town. They were met with simulated enemy indirect fire. The simulated mortar fire was part of Battery G's training for fending off insurgent attacks.

The exercise, called Clear, Hold and Build 4, is one of four training exercises within Enhanced Mojave Viper, the Corps' premier pre-deployment training event, that tests units' combat abilities.

Each of the CHBs is broken into three phases.

Infantrymen empty a village of insurgents during the "clear" phase. This is the stage most associated with raids and fire fights.

Marines stabilize the village during the "hold" stage, ensuring that it is safe for evacuated citizens to return. The "build" stage is when the town returns, repairs from battle damage begin and the troops foster relationships with the local population.

The four CHB exercises follow a crawl, walk, run schedule. Each one builds on the one before it.

The first three are more kinetic in that they help build up the different core competencies the Marines need to act as America's middle-weight response force. The CHBs also refine integration between the air and ground elements of a Marine Air Ground Task Force before the units deploy to combat zones.

The culminating CHB-4 segment tests the Marines' skills in a dynamic urban battlefield. Success depends on their civilian interactions.

Battery G is unique in that they are going to have to operate their M777 howitzers as well as provide their own fire and maneuver, said Lt. Col. Joseph Allena, the battalion's commander.

The battery also had help in locating improvised explosive devices from role players acting as Afghan nationals during their CHB-4 exercise. The battery practiced their skills in interacting with the nationals and defended the town from counter-insurgency efforts.

"The Marines were a bit out of their comfort

See EMV, A8

Tanks compete for top shooter in Corps, bragging rights

STORY AND PHOTOS BY
LANCE CPL. SARAH DIETZ

COMBAT CORRESPONDENT

BOISE, Idaho – The top crew in each of the Corp's tank battalions traveled to Boise, Idaho, for the annual Tiger Competition Saturday.

The Marine tank community is a small one. There are only three battalions, two active duty and one reserve.

The event brought the battalions together for a tank shoot out to determine the best and most lethal crew in the Corps. The victors also left with year-long bragging rights.

"This is absolutely a great opportunity to train with Marines from around the tank community," said Cpl. Joe Lombardo, the gunner for the 1st Tanks crew. "I've never known a brotherhood like I've known in tanks."

The competition began as an annual event. High manpower requirements during Operation Iraqi Freedom forced the tankers to cancel future meets. Last year was the first time the contest was held in nearly seven years.

The course of fire included main and machine gun fire; movement; nuclear biological and chemical fire, which includes firing with gas masks on; impaired sites; and firing from offensive and defensive positions. The crews fired upon simulated tank and infantry targets.

The crews competing in Tiger Comp had to first prove they were worthy of representing their units by beating every crew in their own battalions.

"This is like a once in a lifetime opportunity," said Sgt. Michael McClain, the loader for the 2nd Tanks crew in the competition. "It's not common to come to Tiger Comp, especially since they just restarted it. It was



[Above] Tanks fire down range at the Tiger Competition Saturday at the 4th Tank Battalion Compound in Boise, Idaho Saturday. The competition included the best crew from every tank battalion in the Marine Corps to compete and represent their battalion.

[Left] The winners of the Tiger Competition, 2nd Tank Battalion, receive their trophy after beating 1st Tanks and 4th Tanks at the 4th Tank Battalion Compound in Boise, Idaho Saturday.

See TANKS, A9

You Tube

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

Diagnosed? How cancer clinical trials can help

SHARI LOPATIN

TriWest Healthcare Alliance

When Ellen Beare learned she had Stage 3 breast cancer, she decided not to tell people at work.

"I just didn't want to be defined by cancer," Beare said.

For many, that sentiment rings very common today. Nearly 12 million Americans were diagnosed with some type of cancer in 2010, according to the National Cancer Institute.

Discovering you, or a loved one has cancer, is very difficult. Beare - who is a care coordinator in Tacoma, Wash., for TriWest Healthcare Alliance - struggled the most with telling her son.

"It was probably harder telling him than anything else," Beare said, pausing to keep from crying. "He is my only child."

For those who have received this type of news, TRICARE recently expanded its coverage for cancer clinical trials. This makes it possible for cancer patients with TRICARE to receive more types of treatments. Beare, 63, is cancer-free today, and is a strong believer in finding a cure.

"Cancer is very real, very prevalent, but with research, there can be a cure," she said.

What does TRICARE cover?

TRICARE covers three types of cancer clinical trials for those who are eligible. These trials test different ways to prevent, detect and treat various cancers. Of the three phases, Phase I trials were recently added as a TRICARE benefit:

Phase I trials: determine the highest dosage of a drug the body can handle, and the effects that drug has on the body.

Phase II trials: study the safety and effectiveness of an intervention method on a certain type of cancer, and how that method affects the body.

Phase III trials: compare promising new treatments to the standard treatments.

How to sign up

To take part in a trial, pre-authorization is needed. If you're TRICARE-eligible, you may be able to take advantage of the cancer clinical trials. The only exception is active duty service members, who would go through their military clinic instead.

"If clinical trials are available to someone through TRICARE, I would encourage them to get information," Beare said.

For more information, or to see about taking part in a trial, contact a TriWest Cancer Clinical Trial Coordinator by calling 1-866-427-6610.

Centerspeak

How are you preparing for the CFT?

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



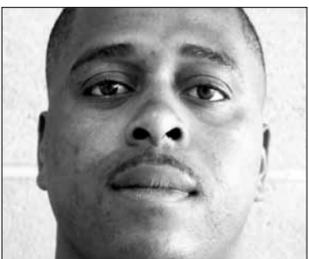
SGT. STEVEN GRABOSKY
MARINE CORPS COMMUNICATION-ELECTRONICS SCHOOL

"Lots of upper body training and circuit courses."



LANCE CPL. DAVID KASPER
COMPANY C, 1ST TANK BATTALION

"Going to the gym, working with a 35-45 pound weight, and boots and utilities runs in the mountains."



GUNNERY SGT. WENDELL WILSON
3RD BATTALION, 11TH MARINE REGIMENT

"More boots and utes runs, combat conditioning, team competitions and ammo can lifts."

Hot Topics

MEN'S BREAKFAST

Join other men for a time of fellowship around God's word and breakfast at the Christ Chapel, Building 1541, Aug. 13, from 8:30-10:30 a.m.

COREY LEVEL AND STIX CONCERT

Corey Level and Stix are coming to the Sunset Cinema Aug. 19 at 7 p.m. to perform live in concert. Doors open at 6:30 p.m., and there will be a snack bar and beer concessions. For more information, call MCCS at 830-5053.

ULTIMATE WARRIOR COMPETITION

Prove yourself at the Ultimate Warrior Competition, Aug. 25 at 5 p.m. at the West Gym. This event is free and open to all authorized MCCS patrons, ages 18 and over. Events include push-ups, an agility ladder, cone shuttle, sit-ups, sprints, tire flip, box jumps, fireman carries, farmer walks and pull-ups. Call 830-6451 for more information, or visit <http://www.SemperFit29.com>.

CAR AND BIKE SHOW

Register for the Commanding General's Car and Bike Show from 11 a.m. to 3 p.m. Oct. 22, at the corner of 5th and Brown. Entry fee is \$5 for active duty and retired service members. Entry fee per vehicle is \$20. Categories: Classic Car, before 1980; Modern Car, after 1980; Truck, any year; Sport and Street Bikes. There will be General's Choice, MCCS Choice and People's Choice prizes. Deadline to enter is Sept. 30. Visit <http://www.mccspecial-events29.com> to enter online.



Eagle Eyes

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 #2264

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		4						3						
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		9				7								

CROSSWORD AND SUDOKU PUZZLES COURTESY OF © 2011 HOMETOWN CONTENT

Marine Corps History

Aug. 9, 1942

With the Guadalcanal airstrip secure after heavy fighting with the Japanese, the 1st Engineer Battalion commenced work on the runway using captured equipment. Three days later, on Aug. 12, the first plane landed on Henderson Field to evacuate two wounded Marines. Nearly 3,000 wounded Marines would be evacuated from Henderson Field during the battle.

TENNIS ANYONE?

[Puzzle solutions on A5]

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52	53						54				55			
56					57	58					59			
60					61						62			
63					64						65			

ACROSS

1. Latvia's capital
5. Site of many Goyas
10. Gush forth
14. Like some testimony
15. CSA general
16. Garr of "Mr. Mom"
17. Wildlife protector
19. Commuter line
20. JFK guesstimate
21. Puts a question to
22. Thrilling, in an unconventional way
23. Does a brake job
25. Dimwit
27. Circus safeguard
28. "That's all, folks!" speaker
31. In a murderous frenzy
34. Tasty mushroom
35. Suffix with señor
36. Be a role model
40. Back in time
41. Broadcasting
42. Rebel ___
43. Rose Bowl city
45. Game piece
47. Vampire repellent
48. Relating to plant life
52. Bull's sound
54. Fair to middling
55. According to Mom
56. Castel Gandolfo resident
57. When doubled, "Fiddler on the Roof" tune
60. Currier's partner
61. Chilling
62. Work in the bleachers
63. Democratic donkey creator
64. Rolls radials
65. Summer quaffs

DOWN

1. Walkie-talkie "OK"
2. Boiling mad
3. ___ Abdel Nasser
4. Tankard filler
5. Car radio button
6. Smells something fierce
7. Hannibal's hurdle
8. Twister Joey
9. Bard's above
10. Like a referee's shirt
11. It's passed in friendship
12. Abstract composer Satie
13. Cunning
18. Classic Welles role
22. Pal of Fran and Ollie
24. "___ Dinka Doo"
25. More tender
26. Jurassic Park sighting
28. Conductors' spots
29. "___ never fly!"
30. Restaurant critic Greene
31. "Yesterday!" in business memos
32. Prefix with bucks or bytes
33. Ear doctors' gadgets
34. Haunted house noises
37. Beckett's no-show
38. Teller's stack
39. Mimicking bird
44. Put the collar on
45. Dances recklessly
46. Molecule builder
48. Dirt-court game
49. Ready to streak
50. ___ Kristen of "Ryan's Hope"
51. Pokémon collectibles
52. Drive to nowhere in particular
53. Chevy of yore
54. Prepare the paint
57. Bon ___ (witty remark)
58. "___ takers?"
59. An ex of Artie and Frank

Combat Center Spotlight



PHOTO BY CPL. ANDREW D. THORBURN

Name: Army Spc. Marcus Miller
Hometown: Albany, N.Y.
Unit: Twentynine Palms Veterinary Services
Job title: Food section noncommissioned officer
Job duties: Ensure quality food aboard installation and save the government money.
What do you like most about your job?: "So far it has to be all the traveling. In this job, we are able to travel to different bases across the country."
What is your most memorable moment while with the unit?: "My re-enlistment ceremony, because we did it a place with a lot of painted rocks, and it was a camaraderie moment. We don't get everyone together very often."
Hobbies: Sports, hiking, fishing and any other outdoor activities.
What is an interesting fact about you most people don't know?: "That I don't try a lot of different food. I am actually very particular with what I eat."
What is the least favorite aspect of your job?: "How small the unit is, because it is so different from my last unit where I worked with about 300 soldiers."
Time at Combat Center: Two years.

OBSERVATION POST

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Deputy Public Affairs Officer - 2nd Lt. Sin Carrano
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 Lance Cpl. Sarah Dietz
 Lance Cpl. D. J. Wu
 Diane Durden

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Marines put combat driving skills to test

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

COMBAT CORRESPONDENT

Larger, heavier combat operation vehicles help keep Marines safe from improvised explosive device blasts, but their bulk also makes them more difficult to maneuver.

This was a challenge the Marines with Marine Wing Support Squadron 271 strove to overcome when they took on the Combat Center's Combat Vehicle Operators Course Aug. 5.

Since 2008, these Marines have usually honed their skills at Marine Corps Air Station Cherry Point, N.C.'s paved driving course, which was constructed in October of that year.

The Combat Center's nine-mile serpentine dirt track presented difficulties the Marines had never faced at their home station. The CVOC here consists of winding curves in rock and sand, as well as steep inclines that put strain on both the vehicles and operators alike.

"At Cherry Point, it's all flat and it's asphalt, it's nothing like when you're [trying to drive] in country" said Lance Cpl. Elizabeth Deanes, a motor transport operator for MWSS-271. "[At the Combat Center] you have the challenges of sand and hills and not being able to see over them."

Prior to taking on the course, the Marines participated in a combat simulation trainer for convoy driving to prepare themselves for the real life course.

The course simulates a typical convoy mission outlined by the convoy commander beforehand.

The Marines learned driving skills vital in operating their vehicles in the rocky and sandy terrain of Afghanistan and how their vehicles will stand up to those conditions.

"The course brought them out of their comfort zone," said 1st Lt. Diana Guadamuz, the MWSS-271 commander. "It's important for the drivers to know the limitations of their vehicles in this kind of terrain."



An MRAP vehicle rolls through the hills of the Combat Center's Combat Vehicle Operators Course Aug. 5. The drivers with MWSS-271 received training in the rugged terrain of the Combat Center vice the familiar paved roads of MCAS Cherry Point, N.C.



Staff Sgt. Chris Spaulding, maintenance chief for Marine Wing Support Squadron 271, based out of Marine Corps Air Station Cherry Point, N.C., sits atop a Mine Resistant Ambush Protected vehicle to perform a radio check before the start of his unit's Combat Vehicle Operators Course Aug. 5. The MWSS-271 team was at the Combat Center supporting units during Enhanced Mojave Viper.



One of seven MRAP vehicles belonging to MWSS-271 keeps on trucking through the CVOC's winding trails.



Marines with MWSS-271 are briefed by Cpl. Jose Martinez, a motor transport mechanic with the unit.

All clear

Photos by 2nd Lt. Sin Y. Carrano

Golf Company, 2nd Battalion, 4th Marine Regiment, Marines were deep into the "hold" phase of their Clear, Hold, Build-4 exercise at the Combat Center's Range 215 during their Enhanced Mojave Viper training Tuesday. During this phase, Marines ensure a town recently emptied of insurgents during the "clear" phase stays that way while waiting for the local populace to return. During the "build" stage, the population returns and fire fight damages are repaired.

For a complete story and more photos on another unit's CHB-4 training, check out page A1.



A sergeant directs his squad while they search for improvised explosive devices.



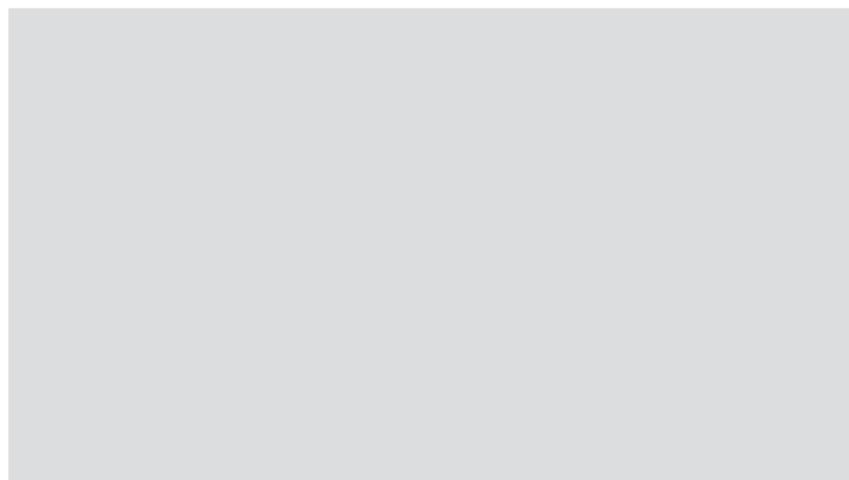
Daisy, a professionally trained, explosives-sniffing dog, takes a break from finding bombs with her handler.



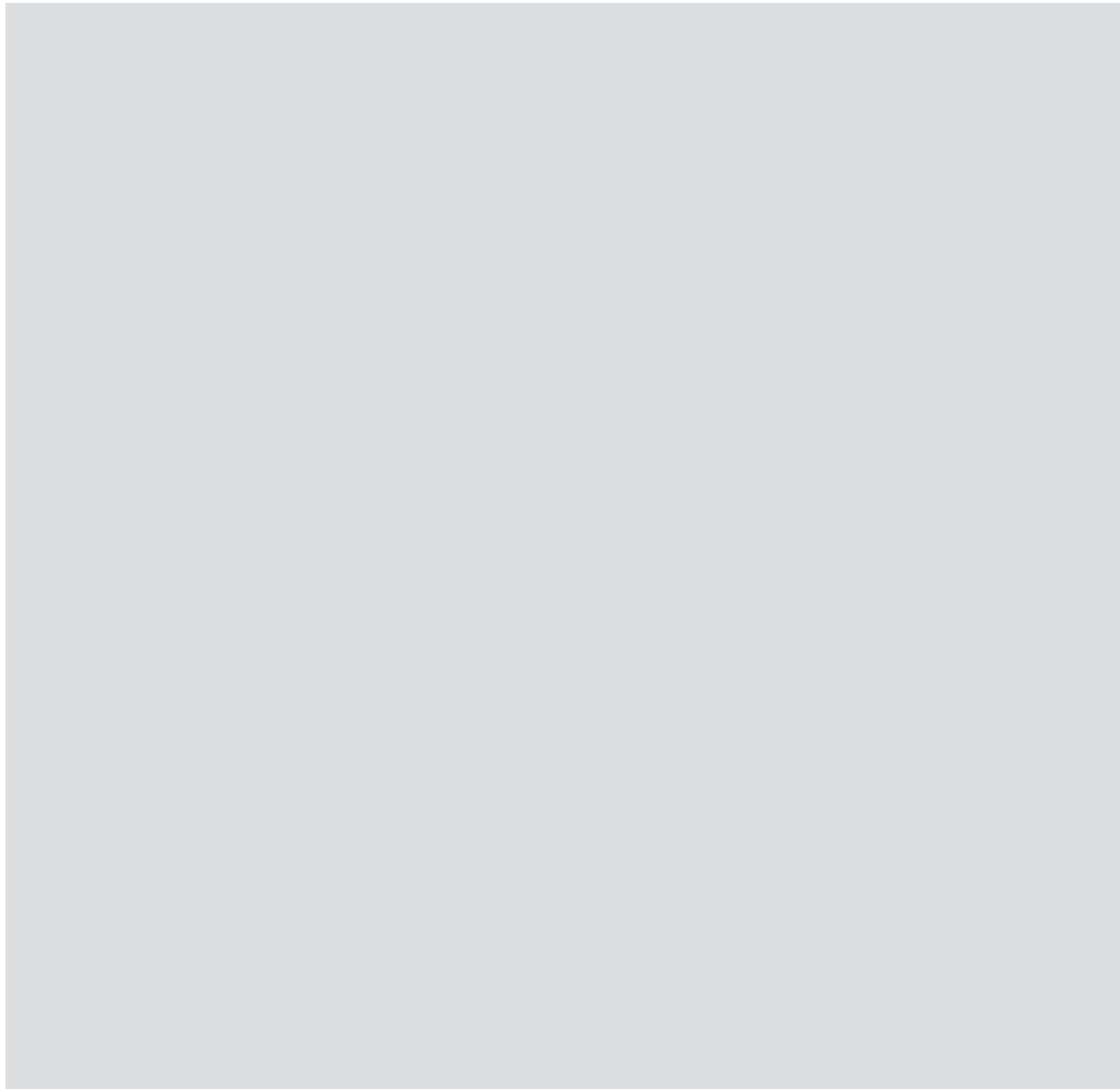
2nd Lt. Zachary R. Burke [left] uses his battalion's translator [center] to inform a local villager, portrayed by a role player, about a possible IED near his house in the mock village.



A Marine takes a short break on the side of a hill as he waits to leave for a patrol.



Marines take a tactical pause from their patrol and scout the area for anything unusual on the horizon before moving on.





BIRTH ANNOUNCEMENTS

**NATHANIEL LEE SNIDER JR.**

Born to Nathaniel and Jessica Snider
June 18, 2011

BROOKLIN LEEANNE COOK

Born to Blake and Leeanne Cook
June 19, 2011

BRAELYNN NICOLE MILLER

Born to Bruce and Katelynn Miller
June 21, 2011

DAVID NATHANIEL QUETEL

Born to Justin and Davelyn Quetel
June 21, 2011

JULIAN ALEXANDER DIAZ

Born to Julio Diaz Morenta and Sophia Diaz
June 22, 2011

SHELBY NICOLE TADLOCK

Born to Chris and Jenna Tadlock
June 22, 2011

TARYNN ALICE PALCER

Born to Chase and Lexi Palcer
June 24, 2011

LEYNA SARA TIERMAN

Born to Joshua and Loretta Tierman
June 24, 2011

MAKAELYNN FAITH KRUKOWSKI

Born to Michael and Ashley Krukowski
June 27, 2011

ELEANOR WANONA HICKMAN

Born to Ronald and Kimberly Hickman
June 29, 2011

BRYCE DONAVAN MCGEE

Born to Andrew and Katie McGee
June 30, 2011

JULIANA NOELLE SHEPLER

Born to Andrew and Amie Shepler
July 3, 2011

JUDAH DIANA BREWSTER

Born to Benjamin and Diana Brewster
July 4, 2011

NATALIE ROSE PALUMBO

Born to Marc and Julianne Palumbo
July 4, 2011

LILY MARIE DEFOOR

Born to Timothy and Rebekah Defoor
July 5, 2011

MAKENNA LEIGH MINIER

Born to Thomas and Brittany Minier
July 7, 2011

KOLSTON RYAN SCOTT**STEPHEN**

Born to Ryan and Amanda Stephen
July 9, 2011

ALYANA MIA NIGO

Born to Jayson and Carla Nigo
July 11, 2011

MATTHEW KEITH OLDENBURG

Born to Matthew and
Catherine Oldenburg
July 13, 2011

CALI ROSE MORRISON

Born to Steven and
Tiffany Morrison
July 13, 2011

CHRISTOPHER FELTON**BOLLING JR.**

Born to Christopher and
Kayleigh Bolling
July 13, 2011

DAYAMI FERNANDA SOLORIO

Born to Isaac Solorio and Maritza Carrillo
July 14, 2011

CALI DOVE GUTHER

Born to Christian and
Courtney Guther
July 14, 2011

MOLLY EILLEN SWITZER

Born to Bradley and Krystal Switzer
July 15, 2011

SAMUEL EUGENE PETRY III

Born to Samuel and Veronica Petry
July 15, 2011

ROBBIE DEANNA BROWND

Born to Jory and Ronda Brownd
July 16, 2011

SJA CORNER

How to use Legal Assistance for pre-deployment preparation

CAPT. SHANNON MAWSON

LEGAL ASSISTANCE OFFICE

Legal Assistance receives many requests from units needing wills, powers of attorney and law of war pre-deployment services and briefs for their service members.

In addition to supporting these units, Legal Assistance plays various other roles in the judge advocate world and provides services not only for units stationed aboard the Combat Center, but also to visiting units training at Camp Wilson who request legal support.

Here are some tips for small unit leaders who are preparing their unit's pre-deployment and requesting Legal Assistance services:

- Schedule a will/POA brief with Legal Assistance at least three months prior to deploying. This will ensure that those service members needing a will and estate planning documents will have enough time to return to Legal Assistance to execute their documents. Often times, a unit will wait until the last minute to schedule this service, and the service member will have already deployed before their estate planning documents can be executed.

- When scheduling this service, give the

legal assistance officer the total number of service members needing support, reserve a classroom or location appropriate for that number, provide Legal Assistance with the unit's pre-deployment leave schedule, and ask the legal assistance officer what legal documents the unit will need to provide beforehand, such as power of attorney forms and will worksheets.

- Communicate to other leaders within your unit about scheduling these briefs to ensure the maximum possible participation for your service members. Legal Assistance will often receive requests from several different companies within a unit for the same support. Unbeknownst to the individual companies, they could have worked together to receive their briefs. Legal Assistance does, however, understand that sometimes the various different companies are unable to come together due to their individual training schedules.

Legal Assistance's goal is to ensure a unit requesting pre-deployment services receives the highest quality service possible, and to ensure all service members have their affairs in order and their families taken care of prior to deploying.

Call Legal Assistance at 830-6111 to schedule a pre-deployment brief for your unit.

Combat Center Religious Services

Sunday**Immaculate Heart of Mary**

8:45 a.m. - Confessions+
9 a.m. - Rosary
9:30 a.m. - Catholic Mass*
9:30 a.m. - Children's Liturgy of the Word
4 p.m. - Choir Practice
4:15 p.m. - Confessions+
4:30 p.m. - Rosary
5 p.m. - Catholic Mass
Christ Chapel
9 a.m. - Calvary Fellowship (Contemporary Worship*)
9 a.m. - Children's Church
10:30 a.m. - Redemption (A blend of traditional and contemporary worship)
10:45 a.m. - Children's Church*

Weekday Events**Immaculate Heart of Mary**

Mon.-Fri. 11:45 a.m.-Catholic Mass
Christ Chapel
Mon. - Fri., noon - Prayer
Tuesday
Christ Chapel
9 a.m. - Christian Women's Fellowship* (Sept.-May)
Immaculate Heart of Mary
3:30-5:30 p.m. - Military Council of Catholic Women
Wednesday
Immaculate Heart of Mary
First Wednesday, 6 p.m. - Baptism preparation class and 7 p.m. - Knights of Columbus

Thursday**Immaculate Heart of Mary**

9 a.m. - Adult Class
6 p.m. - Children RCIA
6:30 p.m. - RCIA (Sept.-April)
7 p.m. - Gr. 7 and Confirmation
Friday
Immaculate Heart of Mary
First Friday each month,
12:15 p.m.,
4:30 p.m. - Exposition/Adoration Most Blessed Sacrament
Legend
* Indicates child care is provided
+ Call 830-6456/6482 for confession appointments



Muslim prayer space is available in the Village Center, room 87.

Jewish prayer space is available in the Village Center, room 93.

For more information call 830-5430.

Officer Professional Military Education

Distance Education Program

Expeditionary Warfare School

&

Command and Staff College

Register for Fall Academic Year 2012 Seminars

July 1 - September 1 2011



ENROLL TODAY



facebook

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

SUDOKU SOLUTIONS

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

CROSSWORD SOLUTIONS

R	I	G	A	P	R	A	D	O	S	P	E	W
O	R	A	L	R	E	L	E	E	T	E	R	I
G	A	M	E	K	E	E	P	E	R	R	A	I
E	T	A	A	S	K	S	K	I	C	K	Y	
R	E	L	I	N	E	S	S	T	U	P	E	
A	M	O	K	M	O	R	E	L	I	T	A	
S	E	T	A	G	O	O	D	E	X	A	M	P
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C	R	O	S	S	B	O	T	A	N	I	C	
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P	O	P	E	M	A	T	C	H	M	A	K	E
I	V	E	S	O	N	I	C	E	V	E	N	D
N	A	S	T	T	Y	R	E	S	A	D	E	S

Fox Company wraps up training Down Under

CAPT. CALEB D. EAMES
31st MARINE EXPEDITIONARY UNIT

ROBERTSON BARRACKS, DARWIN, Australia – Marines and sailors of Company F, Battalion Landing Team 2nd Battalion, 7th Marines, 31st Marine Expeditionary Unit, successfully completed bilateral exercise Raider Dawn with a squad competition after a week spent training with the Australian Defence Forces.

The challenging squad competition was an opportunity for the Marines to apply what they had been practicing, as well as develop teamwork and leadership.

“It was start-to-finish as a team,” said Cpl. Terren Burgess, a mortarman with Co. F, BLT 2/7, 31st MEU, from Sacramento, Calif. “We started with the disassembly and assembly of our weapons, then we fired on the battlesight zero course to see who could get the tightest grouping. Next we grabbed full water jugs and sprinted to a machinegun shooting course. Finally, we picked up a casualty and ran to the finish line. This competition brought us together, working as a team. It was good experience and a good culminating event.”

The exercise involved Marines from the 31st MEU

partnering with Australian soldiers of the 1st Brigade to share knowledge of their weapons systems, tactics and other military skills.

“The Marines have come out to train and to use the first brigade’s facilities,” said Australian Army Lt. Col. Scott Watkins, chief of staff, 1st Brigade. “We train regularly with the Marines. The benefits are that we train as allies together, and because we train together, we can operate together more smoothly. We want to see this happen again.”

For the past week, Co. F has been doing infantry skills training and patrolling exercises, said Capt. John Dalby, company commander, Co. F, BLT 2/7, 31st MEU.

“The ranges and facilities here have been top notch, allowing us to improve our skills,” Dalby said. “And one of the biggest benefits has been the interaction with the Australian soldiers, learning each other’s weapons, vehicles and culture – that is something that goes a long way.”

As the Marines trained with Australian soldiers, relationships were built.

“The interaction with the Australian soldiers has been remarkable,” said 1st Sgt. Christopher Griffin, Co. F



CAPT. CALEB D. EAMES

Marines with Company F, Battalion Landing Team 2nd Battalion, 7th Marine Regiment, 31st Marine Expeditionary Unit, run during a timed squad competition drill held at the culmination of bilateral exercise Raider Dawn. This exercise increases interoperability and mutually benefits the U.S. and Australian armed services by giving them an opportunity to learn from each other. The 31st MEU is the only continually forward-deployed MEU, and remains the United States’ force-in-readiness in the Asia-Pacific region.

first sergeant, BLT 2/7, 31st MEU. “There has been some friendly competition as the Australian soldiers did our physical training and martial arts program with us. It has been a great week and a great friendship.”

The squad completion

involved weapons familiarity, moving to different locations, firing on two different ranges, and evacuating a casualty.

“We work great together, and we are always exercising with our full gear on and carrying our weapons, so we did

good,” said Cpl. Jarrod Larosa, from Phoenix, Ariz., squad leader with Co. F, BLT 2/7, 31st MEU. “This brought our section together, and helps to develop our young leaders.”

Larosa, whose squad won the final competition, said that the event helps the company get ready for possible upcoming combat deployments.

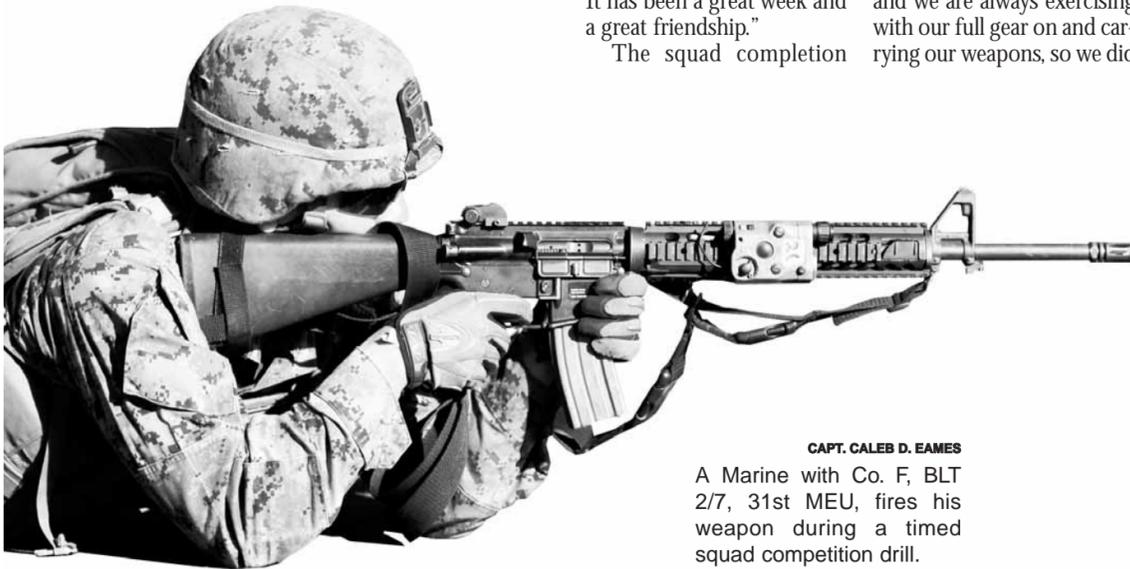
“This week-long exercise went great, we got to shoot a lot of rounds, do night training, and lots of good field training,” said Larosa. “This helps our marksmanship, allows us to get comfortable with our weapons systems, it is a big part of being ready to go to combat.”

“This week overall, we got the opportunity to exercise each skill we have as a company,” added Staff

Sgt. Juan Urdiales, from Scott’s Bluff, Neb., a platoon sergeant with Co. F, BLT 2/7, 31st MEU. “This builds the individual confidence of the Marines, that each of them will do their part successfully. This helps bring us together and get in the proper mindset, see what deficiencies we can work on and helps us get better at accomplishing our mission.”

The 31st MEU provides a forward-deployed, flexible sea-based force capable of conducting amphibious operations, crisis response and limited contingency operations in the Asia-Pacific area.

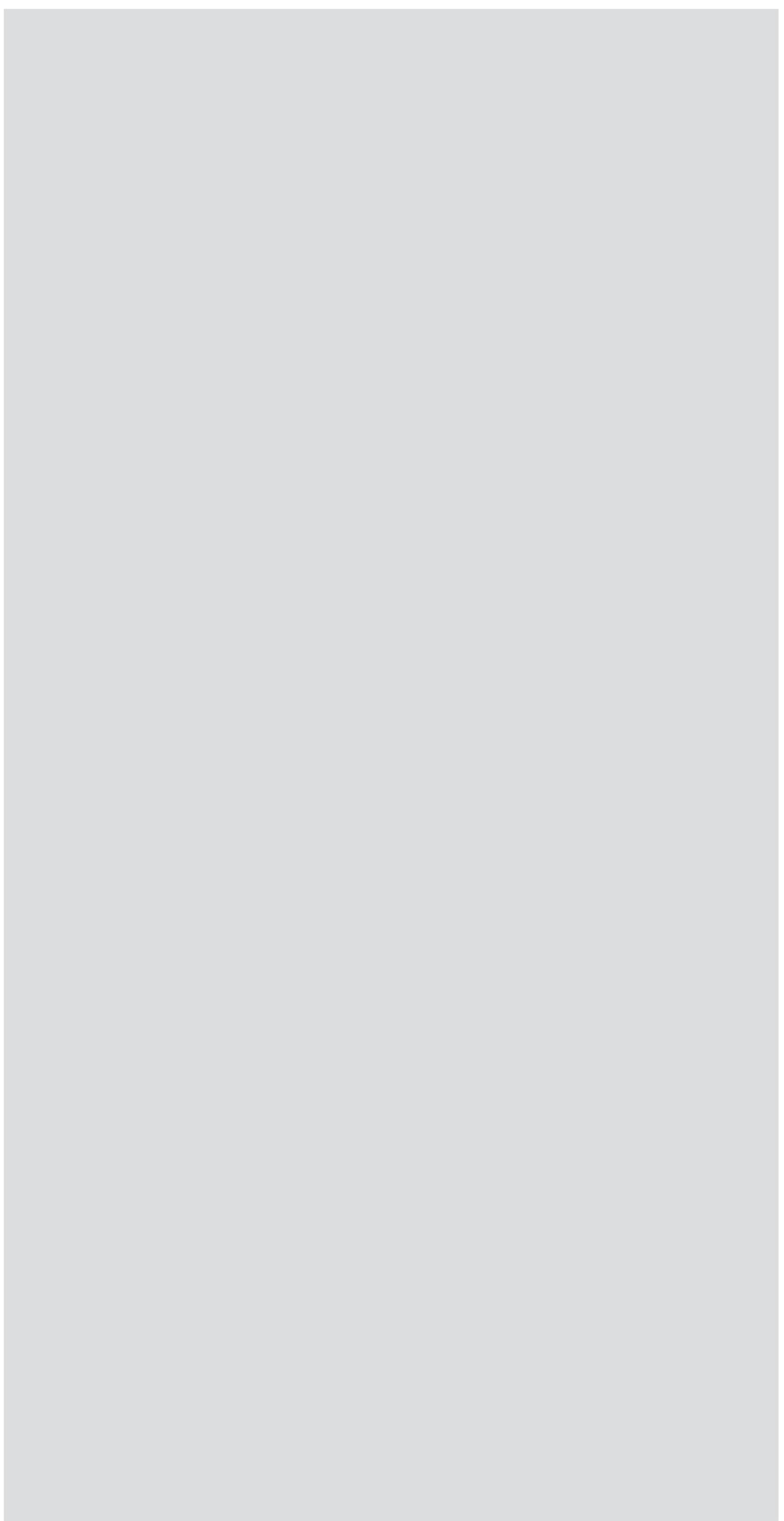
The 31st MEU is the only continually forward-deployed MEU, and remains the United States force-in-readiness in the Asia-Pacific region.



CAPT. CALEB D. EAMES

A Marine with Co. F, BLT 2/7, 31st MEU, fires his weapon during a timed squad competition drill.

For local entertainment see our LIBERTY CALL section on page B2



EMV, from A1

zone, but Battery G is doing well in their provisional rifle company position," said Capt. Matthew Agnoli, the operations officer for 2/11.

The role Battery G played in this exercise is going to be very similar to the role they will play in their upcoming deployment to Afghanistan in the fall.

"I just tied my boots, put my boot blouses on, and the second I know, I hear the mortar going off and rounds going off," said Pfc. Michael Yanez, a radio operator with 2/11, at the start of the fire fight in the morning. "It was like clock-work. Snap, my gear was on."



LANCE CPL. D. J. WU

A rifle muzzle peeks out from a wall. After 2/11 secured a town during their CHB-4 exercise, they provided security for their combat outpost against insurgents.



LANCE CPL. D. J. WU

[Back left] A Marine with Battery G, 2nd Battalion, 11th Marine Regiment, stands guard in a training town during the Clear, Hold, Build 4 training aboard the Combat Center Aug. 9.

ENERGY, from A1

an emphasis on renewable energy, [the Combat Center] achieved 9.2 percent in renewable energy production through the implementation of photovoltaic systems."

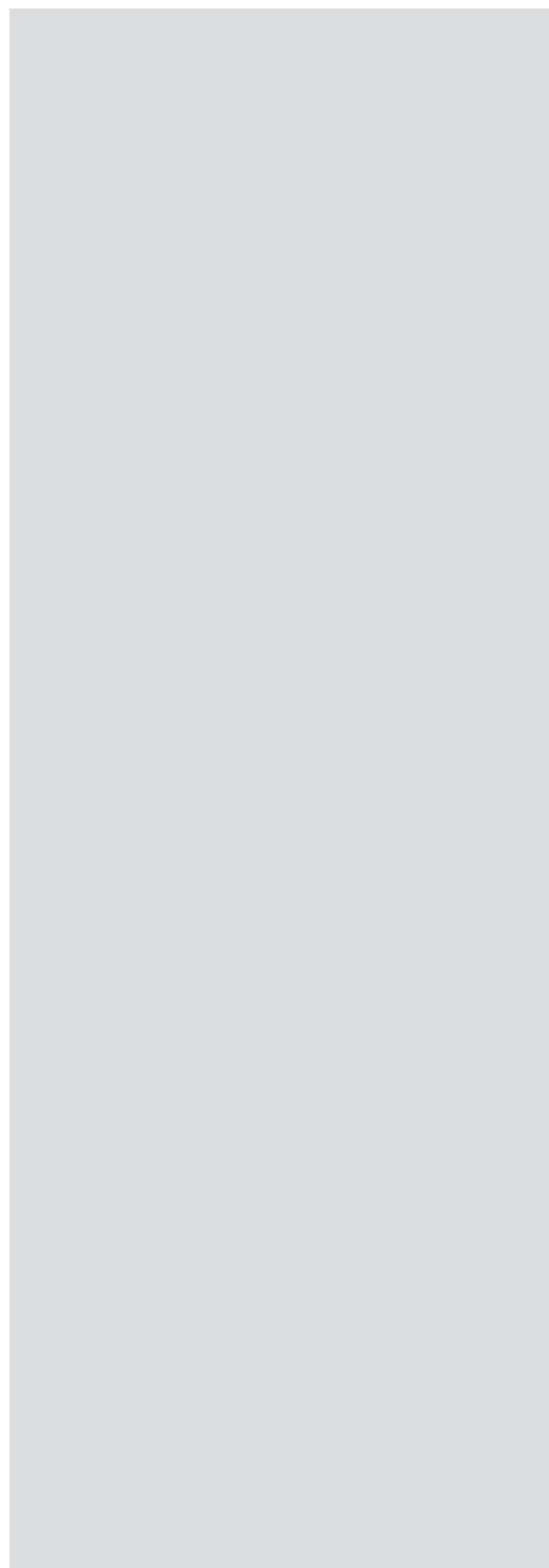
The Combat Center's energy management team will be honored at a reception at the Omni Shoreham Hotel in Washington, D.C., on Oct. 12. They will accept the award on behalf of the Combat Center during an award ceremony the following day.



SGT. HEATHER GOLDEN

A solar panel soaks up the desert sun outside of a generator it is helping provide power for outside the Marine Corps Tactics and Operations Group headquarters.

ADVERTISEMENT





LANCE CPL. SARAH DIETZ

Gunnery Sgt. Ian Fisher, the 1st Tank Battalion crew's master gunner, cleans the barrel of an M1A1 Abrams tank after the Tiger Competition at the 4th Tank Battalion Compound in Boise, Idaho, Saturday.



LANCE CPL. SARAH DIETZ

Pfc. Jonathan Blake, a 1st Tank Battalion driver, gets his tank ready before the Tiger Competition.



LANCE CPL. SARAH DIETZ

Crews from 1st and 2nd Tank Battalions mingle as they await the competition results.

TANKS, from A1

great, I think they should make it longer."

In spite of the playful smack talk and insults thrown back and forth, the Marines of the tank community displayed a sense of brotherhood few could put into words.

"You come to look at these guys like brothers," Duff said. "Because we are so small, we all rely on each other."

A week before the competition, the crews practiced firing on the range, getting to know the area where they would shoot. The crews

shot M1A1 Abrams tanks, with Multipurpose Antitank and sabot rounds.

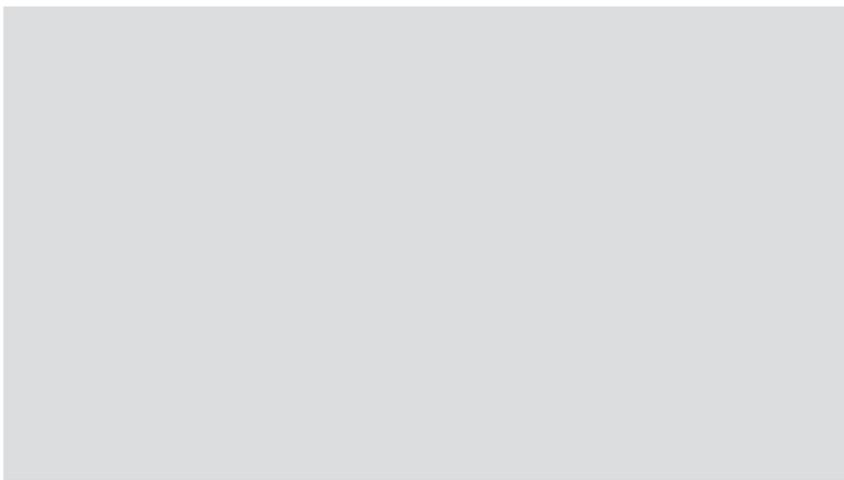
While firing, the Marines not only locked-on their shooting, but also locked-on their relationships with each other, while keeping a combat mindset.

"Making a competent well-rounded tank crew is our goal," said Sgt. Melvin Wilson, tank commander for the 1st Tanks crew. "Training here preps us for combat. If we train in different areas like this, we can do it anywhere, catch the ball? I'm glad we came."

The competition was extremely close, and 2nd

Tank Battalion out of Marine Corps Base Camp Lejeune, N.C., pulled ahead the Combat Center's 1st Tanks by one shot, winning the competition and forcing 1st Tanks to go home as second place winners. The Reserve Marines of 4th Tank Battalion, out of Fort Knox, Ky., was relegated to third.

"Tankers are extremely competitive," said Maj. Jared Duff, the executive officer for 1st Tanks. "Being good at gunnery is important, and tankers take it personally. It's a pride thing and a sense of fulfillment. It's what our infantry brothers need us to do."



Combat Center Trader Ads

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2008 TOYOTA YARIS. \$10,000 OBO. Approximately 58K miles. Good condition. Consistent maintenance. Call 622-4562.

2001 BOMBARDIER DS650. Immaculate. Can be seen at lemon lot. \$3,000 OBO. 819-9353.

CLASSIC 1957 CHEVY PICKUP. 350 engine, 3 speed automatic, \$6,900 OBO. 361-3509.

2007 SUZUKI BOULEVARD. Black and chrome, 1600 CC, \$3,000 in extras included. Asking \$7,500. 401-3739.

2007 CR85R HONDA. \$1,500 OBO. 366-7626

2002 XR80R HONDA. \$800 OBO. 366-7626

MISC.

GOLF CLUBS. Ping Eye 2 Irons I-SW \$225. Slazenger forged blades 2-PW \$200. Assorted putters and wedges. Call 413-4015.

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BUNK BED WITH MATTRESSES. White metal, \$200. 366-7626

COLLECTIBLE SPORTS, SCI-FI CARDS: Baseball, football from mid 80's to 90's. Star Trek and Star Wars collectible cards too. Individual heroes, team sets or make an offer on the whole collection. Call Stephen at 567-7921.

YOUR FREE AD HERE

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

Trader Ad forms are available at the Public Affairs Office and may be filled out during normal working hours at Bldg. 1417. Ads may also be submitted

through e-mail, but will only be accepted from those with an @usmc.mil address. If you are active duty, retired military or a family member and do not have an @usmc.mil address you can go to the PAO page of the base Web site at: <http://www.29palms.usmc.mil>

/dirs/pao/ and complete a request to publish an ad.

The limitations for ads are: 15-word limit, limit of two ads per household and the Trader may be used only for noncommercial classified ads containing items of personal property offered by and for individuals authorized to

use this service. Such ads must represent incidental exchanged not of sustained business nature.

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

To have a "House For Sale" ad run in the Observation Post, applicants must

provide Permanent Change of Station orders and have the ad approved by Base Housing. This ensures the Combat Center Trader is not used for commercial real estate endeavors.

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

TRAP exercise keeps troops rescue-ready

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

COMBAT CORRESPONDENT

When a U.S. Air Force pilot went down in Libya in March, the 26th Marine Expeditionary Unit responded quickly with a Tactical Recovery of Aircraft and Personnel mission and successfully brought the pilot home.

Incidents like this are the reason why Marines with 2nd Battalion, 4th Marine Regiment, teamed up with Marine Medium Tiltrotor Squadron 365 from Marine Corps Air Station New River, N.C., for a TRAP exercise in the Combat Center's training area on July 31.

Unlike standard combat search and rescue missions, a TRAP mission is self-contained within the elements of a Marine Air Ground Task Force, said Capt. Robert Preston, the standardization officer and a pilot with VMM-365.

Ready for anything, Marines train to act quickly the moment word is passed that a pilot has gone down.

"We focus on the short term," said Capt. Nicholas

Arnold, the exercise's operations officer. "Someone goes down, we go get them. We use quick response force, which is what the Marine Corps is known for."

The Combat Center's vast training area was the ideal location for the TRAP exercise. Low light conditions were an added challenge for the pilots and ground forces.

With the mission clear, the Marines loaded up into MV-22 Ospreys at the Enhanced Mojave Viper flight line to rescue a notionally downed pilot. Throughout the mission, the Marines worked silently and efficiently.

Upon touching down in the landing zone, the Marines made quick work locating and retrieving the stranded pilot.

With the pilot safely onboard the aircraft, the Marines made their way back.

"I think the mission went well," said Preston. "I think we learned a lot, and that will pay off in the upcoming months in Afghanistan."

The VMM-365 Marines are scheduled to deploy to Afghanistan early next year.



Marines with 2nd Battalion, 4th Marine Regiment, sit in a MV-22 Osprey as it takes off for their Tactical Recovery of Aircraft and Personnel exercise aboard the Combat Center July 31. They partnered with Marine Medium Tiltrotor Squadron 365 crew members for the mission.



Aviation mechanics work on an MV-22 Osprey at the Combat Center's flight line.



Crew members with VMM-365 sit at the rear of an MV-22 Osprey after the completion of their nighttime TRAP exercise. Marines from 2/4, worked closely with VMM-365 during this exercise.



'First Team' families enjoy Summer Blast

**STORY AND PHOTOS BY
 DIANE DURDEN**
 PUBLIC AFFAIRS SPECIALIST

A bounce house, inflatable water slide, rock climbing wall and mechanical bull were just a few of the activities set up for the Marines and families of 1st Battalion, 7th Marine Regiment, as they gathered at Felix Field for their family day picnic, called Summer Blast, Aug. 5.

Summer Blast was a chance for the "First Team" to relax, socialize and have a good time, said Lt. Col. David Bradney, the battalion's commander. Downtime spent

with families is an essential evolution in the unit's training schedule, he said.

"We forget that an important part of the Marine Corps is socializing with their fellow Marines and their families," he said.

Unit commanders often use these events as opportunities to get to know more of the Marines under their charge.

"I usually only get to meet the Marines one or two at a time, now I get to see all of the Marines," said Bradney. "I get to see them in a relaxed setting, a social setting. We get to talk about all kinds of stuff, not just work."

The afternoon in the park was not just

an occasion for the Marines to relax and enjoy a good cook-out. It was time spent getting to know each other's families, too.

There were plenty of activities available for adults and children throughout the day. One of the more popular ones was the inflatable water slide.

Israel Rivera III, 9-year-old son of Gunnery Sgt. Israel Rivera Jr., company gunnery sergeant for Company A, said despite lots of games and a mechanical bull, he wasn't playing on anything else but the slide.

"It's much better because it's hot out, and it keeps me cool," he said.

Lance Cpl. Michael Trevino, a rifleman with Company B, took a spin on the mechanical bull. Getting to spend time with his brothers is the reason Trevino said he looks forward to the unit's family days.

"We are just having fun," he added.

Part of that fun was getting the opportunity to drop the battalion commander into the dunk tank. The challenge tested the guests' pitching arms. All they had to do to send Bradney launching with a splash was hit a small target with a softball. Several tried,

See **BLAST**, B4



Families enjoy themselves on a swing set.



Lance Cpl. Michael Trevino, a rifleman with Company B, 1st Battalion, 7th Marine Regiment, hangs on and tries to maintain his balance on a mechanical bull, one of several activities for Marines and their families during the unit's Summer Blast family day event at Felix Field Aug. 5.



An inflatable water slide was a popular playground for guests trying to keep cool under the summer sun.

Basketball camp works fundamentals

**CPL. ANDREW D.
 THORBURN**
 COMBAT CORRESPONDENT

A few Combat Center children are now well versed in the basics of one of the most popular games in America, thanks to the Youth Basketball Camp, held at the West Gym and Fitness Center this week.

During the three-day camp, the young athletes learned the fundamentals from a former professional basketball player

and coach, who said he enjoyed spending the days giving back to military families.

"They are our future," said Kirk Baker, the camp director and former pro. "I like what the base has to offer. It is not just about the parents. It is the whole community that helps build this base."

The other coaches said this event was also a good opportunity to show the kids what is possible in the future if they work hard to

achieve their dreams.

"They see someone from kind of the same background as they are, and they know they have a chance to succeed at an athletic career," said camp coach James Burke. "But the biggest thing is some of their parents are deployed, and they get to come here and be with friends and have someone to look up to."

All of the children said some of their favorite times were the shooting competitions sprinkled throughout the schedule.

The competitions, including the free throw challenge "are the best part for the camp because we got to find out who the best players are," said Alexis Warthen, an 11-year-old camp-goer.

Children who had already participated in other basketball camps said they still learned new techniques at this one.

"It's almost the same stuff as the camp at Camp Lejeune, but I have learned a few fundamentals that I didn't know," said 13-year-old Jacob McKinney.

The camp's popularity has been on the rise since it started, and the coordinators said they expect it to stay around for years to come.

"It has grown every year," Baker said. "I think the kids enjoyed it, from the 5s to 7s, to the 8s to 18s, and I think it is going to keep on going."



CPL. ANDREW D. THORBURN

A young athlete sights in on the basket during the Youth Basketball Camp Wednesday at the West Gym and Fitness Center.

Chilling out poolside



Seaman Edmarce Else swims at the Training Tank here Aug. 11. Else is training to complete the Basic Reconnaissance Course or become a dive medical technician. Else trains everyday, often staying at the pool after work to closing time. Else is a hospital corpsman with 1st Tank Battalion.

Training Tank schedule:

Unit Training – Weekdays from 6 to 10:45 a.m. and 1 to 4 p.m.

Lap swim – Weekdays from 11 a.m. to 12:45 p.m.

Open swim – Weekdays from 4 to 7 p.m. and weekends from 10 a.m. to 7 p.m.

For information on trainer-led workout, call 830-6212.

PHOTOS BY GUNNERY SGT. LEO A. SALINAS





Liberty Call

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: Request 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:

Brennen Leigh

The country singer, songwriter performs
When: 8 p.m., Friday, Aug. 12

Jann Browne

The Calif. Country Music Association's Entertainer of the Year
When: 8 p.m., Saturday, Aug. 13

Where: 53688 Pioneertown Road, Pioneertown
For more information, call 365-5956 or visit <http://www.pappyandharriets.com>.

Yucca Valley Summer Music Fest, The Marine Corps Band

The Combat Center band with brass and jazz ensembles
When: 7 p.m., Saturday, Aug. 13
Where: Yucca Valley Community Center ball field
57090 Twenty-nine Palms Highway, Yucca Valley
For more information call 369-7211 or visit www.yucca-valley.org.

The Perseid Meteor Shower Star Party and sound bath

The popular annual event is considered to be the best meteor shower of the year. Camping is available.
When: 7 p.m. until midnight
Where: The Integratron
2477 Belfield Boulevard, Landers
For more information call 364-3126 or visit <http://www.integratron.com>

Lower Desert

The Hitmen

Alternative rock with a hint of punk
When: 9 p.m., Friday, Aug. 12 and Sept. 2
Where: Morongo Casino Resort and Spa
49500 Seminole Drive, Cabazon
For more information call 800-252-4499 or visit <http://www.morongocasinosort.com>.

Klymaxx, featuring Cheryl Cooley

The rhythm and blues pop band performs
When: 9 p.m., Friday, Aug. 19
Where: Morongo Casino Resort and Spa
49500 Seminole Drive, Cabazon
For more information call 800-252-4499 or visit <http://www.morongocasinosort.com>.

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>.

Diana Ross

The blues/soul diva performs her many hits
When: 8 p.m., Friday, Sept. 9
Where: Fantasy Springs Resort Casino
84-245 Indio Springs Parkway, Indio
For more information call 800-827-2946 or visit <http://www.fantasyspringsresort.com>.

Carlos Mencia

The famous comedian performs his stand up
When: 8 p.m., Friday, Sept. 24
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, Aug. 12

6 p.m. – Cars 2, Rated G
9 p.m. – Super 8, Rated PG-13
Midnight – Bad Teacher, Rated R

Saturday, Aug. 13

11 a.m. – **Free Matinee.** Nanny McPhee Returns, Rated PG
2 p.m. – Mr. Popper's Penguins, Rated PG
6 p.m. – Larry Crowne, Rated PG-13
9 p.m. – Transformers 3, Rated PG-13
Midnight – Green Lantern, Rated PG-13

Sunday, Aug. 14

2 p.m. – Cars 2, Rated G
6 p.m. – Zookeeper, Rated PG-13
9 p.m. – Horrible Bosses, Rated R

Monday, Aug. 15

7 p.m. – Bad Teacher, Rated R

Tuesday, Aug. 16

7 p.m. – Green Lantern, Rated PG-13

Wednesday, Aug. 17

7 p.m. – Super 8, Rated PG-13

Thursday, Aug. 18

7 p.m. – Mr. Popper's Penguins, Rated PG

Steve Carell, Ryan Gosling anchor cast in clever comedy

NEIL POND

AMERICAN PROFILE

"Crazy, Stupid, Love"

Starring Steve Carell, Ryan Gosling and Emma Stone
Rated PG-13

Finally, a "romantic comedy" that lives up to its label.

Both riotously funny and heartwarming sweet, "Crazy, Stupid, Love" sprouts from the breakup of a married couple, Cal, played by Steve Carell, and Emily, played by Julianne Moore, high school sweethearts who wed young, started a family and slowly let the magic slip away. "We stopped being us," she tells him.

Emily tentatively rekindles her office romance with a lovestruck coworker, played by Kevin Bacon, with just the right touch of supporting-cast charisma. Cal licks his wounds at an upscale bar, where he meets the slick, super-smooth ladies' man Jacob, played by Ryan Gosling, who takes pity on his new sad sack acquaintance and agrees to give him a head-to-toe makeover.

Cal's first "conquest" on the singles scene is a school teacher, played by Marisa Tomei, whose extracurricular enthusiasm both thrills and alarms him.

The male-mentoring relationship between Cal and Jacob puts the movie's



COURTESY PHOTO

"Crazy, Stupid, Love" sprouts from the breakup of a married couple, Cal, played by Steve Carell, and Emily, played by Julianne Moore.

wheels in motion. But the ride also includes Cal and Emily's 13-year-old son, his unrequited crush on his older, 17-year-old babysitter, played by Annaleigh Tipton, who is actually 23 and terrific, and the babysitter's secret pining for an older man. That would be Cal, who may be newly "available," but nonetheless remains completely oblivious to the swooning schoolgirl.

When suave Jacob falls for a smart, sensible law student, an effervescent Emma Stone, who initially doesn't melt with his come-on lines, the stage is fully

set for an eventual collision of lives, libidos and loves that come together in a comedic crescendo.

The fun of "Crazy, Stupid, Love" is in the intersection of its multi-generational characters, in ways they don't always see coming. Neither does the audience. That's thanks to a sharp, clever and well-constructed script, and the sure footing of co-directors Glenn Ficarra and John Requa, who never forget the basic, inherent goodness of the people whose hearts drive the story.

Stone and Gosling have a

touching "seduction" scene that doesn't end up the way either one of their characters anticipated, and Carell and Moore share an exceptionally potent, emotional stirring moment in a telephone conversation about, of all things, a water heater's pilot light.

The hokey declaration of love is a bit choppy, but for the most part, "Crazy, Stupid, Love" flies straight and true, a Cupid's arrow that hits its mark. Courtship can be crazy, it tells us, and passion often makes people do and say some pretty stupid things. But love, when you finally find it, is always worth fighting for.



COURTESY PHOTO

A subplot in the movie includes Cal and Emily's 13-year-old son, and his unrequited crush on his older, 17-year-old babysitter, who in turn has a crush on his father.



COURTESY PHOTO

Cal's male mentor and love-life guru, the suave Jacob, played by Ryan Gosling, falls for a smart, sensible law student, played by the effervescent Emma Stone, who initially doesn't melt for his usual come-on lines. The two characters have a touching "seduction" scene that doesn't end up the way either one of their characters anticipated.

Prefer your news from the web?



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29palms.usmc.mil

Desert Detours: The Living Desert



Welcome to "Desert Detours," a series that follows our correspondents around on their explorations of southern California. The "out-of-five" palm tree rating scale offers a glance at how worthwhile the writer considers a place to be. Locales will be judged on their accessibility, atmosphere, fun, cost and facilities. Keep an eye out every week for new shenanigans and hot tips on cool things to do.

STORY AND PHOTOS BY DIANE DURDEN

PUBLIC AFFAIRS SPECIALIST

In an attempt to learn more about my local environment, I decided to head to Palm Desert to check out The Living Desert. Not really knowing what to expect, I was pleasantly surprised to find there was a little bit of everything, animals and plants, along with something for all ages.

The first exhibit you'll see is the "G" scale model train. The more than 3,300 feet of track, consisting of six different loops, each varying from 150-feet to more than 900-feet-long, covers approximately three quarters of an acre.

Train displays currently running are historic scenes, such as Mount Rushmore; a California logging and mining town; and the south rim of the Grand Canyon. The Old Indian train station depicts the early days of railroading in the Coachella Valley from about 1875 to the mid-1950s.

The park is divided primarily into two sections – Africa and North America. These exhibits feature desert dwelling animals. Hornbills, meerkats, warthogs, giraffes,

ostriches and zebras are just a few of the animals you will see in the African deserts. Mountain lions, bobcats, badgers, coyotes, and wolves inhabit the North American exhibits. You won't find any penguins or polar bears here.

Reptiles and birds were scattered throughout the park as well, and not always in a secure setting. One harmless, nonpoisonous snake decided to make his presence known when he followed me from one exhibit to the next. I guess it's a good thing snakes don't freak me out much.

The tree-shaded paths through the park were easy to navigate. I found features I wished to visit easily without having to back-track repeatedly.

Several pavilions, with cooling misters, are located throughout the park and provide visitors with a much needed reprieve from the desert sun.

You can also escape the high temperatures at the Discovery Center, where visitors, especially children, can discover how sun, wind, sand and only a little water work together to make the Coachella Valley a functioning environment. This cooled, indoor exhibit space was one of my

favorite stops.

The Petting Kraal and the Palo Verde Garden Center and Nursery were two of my other top picks. Volunteers were extremely friendly and enthusiastic, not to mention knowledgeable. Their passion was contagious, making me want to come back for another visit.

With so much to see and learn, it's impossible to absorb everything in only one visit. General admission is \$14.25, and the park offers a military discount to anyone with a valid military ID.

The park gets three and a half palms, but could have easily hit four if I had thought about wearing bug spray to ward off the gnats.

The Living Desert is open year-round, but because of the extreme summer heat, time to view the park is shortened. For operating hours and a special events schedule visit the park's website at <http://www.livingdesert.org>.

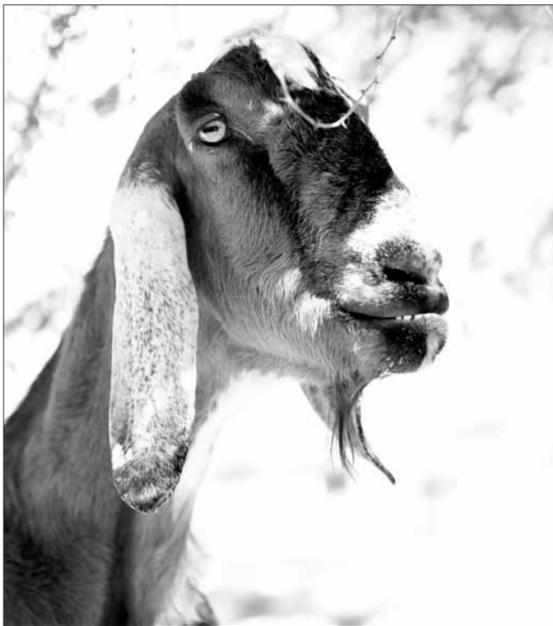
Editor's Note: "Desert Detours" is a weekly series exploring opportunities for Marines and sailors from a firsthand perspective. All material included therein is the opinion of the writer and does not imply an endorsement by the U.S. Marine Corps or the Department of Defense.



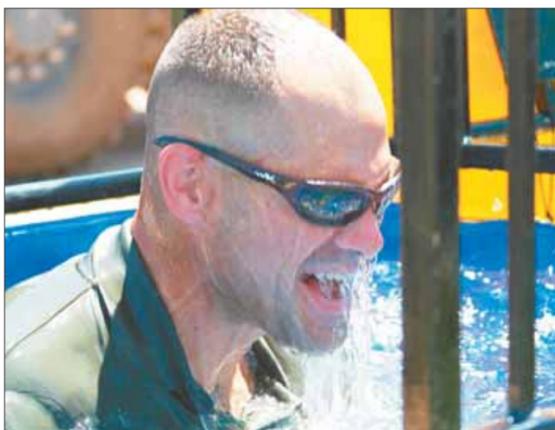
This white crane was one of several birds showcased at the park.



This warthog, one of many animals on exhibit from the African deserts portions of The Living Desert, reminded me of Pumbaa from the movie "The Lion King."



This very friendly goat was eager to demonstrate his social skills in the Petting Kraal.



DIANE DURDEN



DIANE DURDEN

[Above] Lt. Col. David Bradney, battalion commander for 1/7, comes up for air after being dropped into the dunk tank.

[Left] Lena Hansen, 23-month-old daughter of Capt. Rhett Hansen, the commander of Company C, 1/7, keeps cool in the kiddie pool.



DIANE DURDEN

Young guests of 1st Battalion, 7th Marine Regiment's Summer Blast family day celebration had fun and stayed cool playing on the inflatable water slide at Felix Field Aug 5.

BLAST, from A1

but only a few succeeded.

Lance Cpl. Sean Silverman, a 1/7 TOW gunner, was the first one to dunk his leader.

"I didn't think I was going to do it," he said,

thinking he'd give it a shot. "I just barely clipped it."

Up next in the tank was Sgt. Maj. Keith Coombs, battalion sergeant major, who confidently taunted potential dunkers.

However, Coombs didn't intimidate 7-year-old

Maddy Polich, daughter of Staff Sergeants Jeremy and Melissa Polich, both with Headquarters Battalion.

Maddy received a 1/7 unit T-shirt from the now-soaked sergeant major for being the first one to dunk him.

The Polich family attend-

ed Summer Blast to pass out and explain Child Print ID Kits from the Provost Marshal to the unit's families. The kit provided parents with the opportunity to collect fingerprints and other identifying markers for their child, along with

child safety tips.

The welfare of the Marines and the support of their families is important to any leader.

"That support network [the Marines] have around them is something we need to engage and be a part of,"

said Bradney. "Ultimately, that's the welfare of that Marine. When he's OK, then he's better prepared to do what he needs to do."

The battalion has two more family day events planned before the unit deploys again later next year.