



May 11, 2012

Vol. 56 Issue 16

Battaglia accepts award for all enlisted

DONNA MILES
 AMERICAN FORCES PRESS SERVICE

The top U.S. non-commissioned officer shared the spotlight last night with fellow honorees U.N. Secretary-General Ban Ki-moon, Prince Harry and other luminaries as he accepted a prestigious Atlantic Council leadership award on behalf of all enlisted service members.

Sgt. Maj. Bryan B. Battaglia, senior enlisted advisor to the chairman of the Joint Chiefs of Staff, accepted the Distinguished Military Leadership Award at the council's annual awards dinner. The award recognizes the contributions toward a better world made by enlisted soldiers, sailors, airmen, Marines and coast guardsmen, several dozen of whom attended the dinner.

"Our enlisted men and women have patriotically provided enduring freedoms within the borders of our homeland and beyond."

— Sgt. Maj. Bryan B. Battaglia

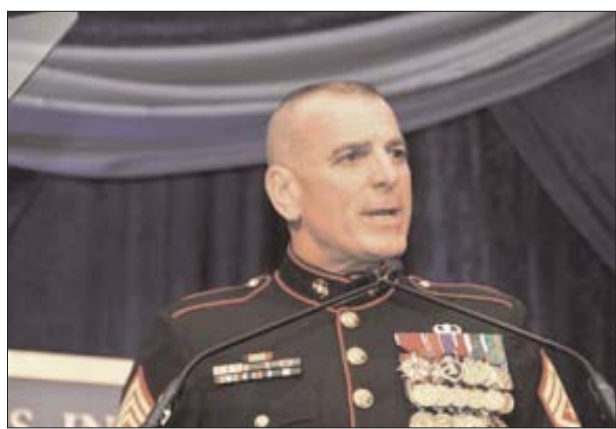
"It is indeed humbling to represent an enlisted corps of over 1 million men and women, a diverse and powerful composition reaching all walks of life," Battaglia told a group of almost 900 former and current administration officials, members of Congress, ambassadors and influential business leaders.

He noted the transformation of the enlisted force since its inception 237 years ago into a "multi-dimensional, multi-talented enlisted corps" that brings unprecedented capability and professionalism to the all-volunteer force.

"Our enlisted men and women have patriotically provided enduring freedoms within the borders of our homeland and beyond," he told the gathering.

"We are no longer just simply a defender of society, but rather, a vigorous group which helps sustain the

See **AWARD, A7**

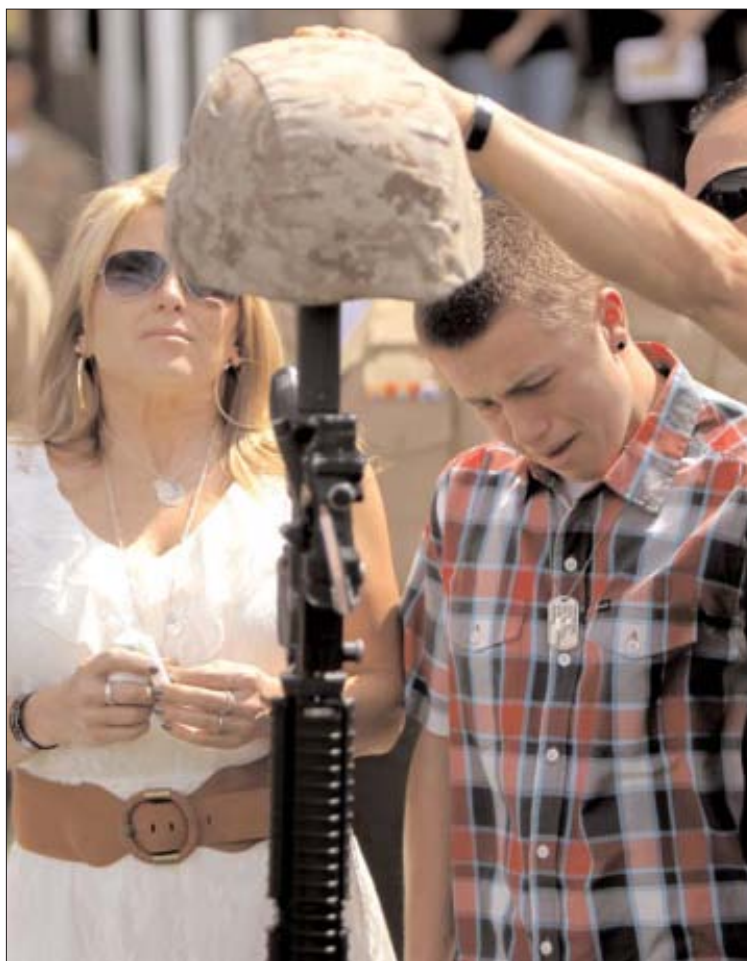


ARMY MASTER SGT. TERENCE L. HAYES

Marine Corps Sgt. Maj. Bryan B. Battaglia, senior enlisted advisor to the chairman of the Joint Chiefs of Staff, helps to accept the 2012 Distinguished Military Leadership Award on behalf of the entire active and reserve enlisted force during the annual Atlantic Council Awards Dinner in Washington, D.C., May 7.

A moment of Silence

LANCE CPL. D. J. WU
 COMBAT CORRESPONDENT



DIANE DURDEN

[Above] Denise Corral, mother of Lance Cpl. Joshua Corral, and his best friend, Tyler Hack, stand in front of the battlefield cross honoring Lance Cpl. Joshua Corral. Corral was one of seven Marines with 3rd Battalion, 7th Marine Regiment, who died while conducting combat operations during the unit's last deployment to Afghanistan.

[Below] Marines with 3rd Battalion, 7th Marine Regiment hang dog tags from the battlefield crosses during the Remembrance Ceremony. Seven crosses were placed on the field to honor the Marines who were killed during combat operations in Afghanistan.



LANCE CPL. D. J. WU

Dog tags swaying in the breeze, as they hung from the rifles of battlefield crosses, were dedicated to seven Marines with 3rd Battalion, 7th Marine Regiment, who gave their lives in service to their country during combat operations in the battalion's recent deployment to Afghanistan.

Family and friends paid their respects to the service members during a remembrance ceremony at Lance Cpl. Torrey L. Gray Field, May 2.

Loved ones of Lance Cpls. Jordan Basteau, Jason Barfield, Nickolas Daniels and Joshua Corral; Cpls. Zachary Reiff and Christopher Singer; and Staff Sgt. Joseph D'Augustine, came out to the Combat Center, to be part of their

"To lead a battalion of Marines into combat is a privilege of a lifetime, but it is one that comes at a great cost."

— Lt. Col. Seth Folsom

remembrance ceremony.

The seats filled up quickly and quietly before the battalion chaplain, Navy Lt. Byron Johnson, opened the ceremony with a prayer, reading Ecclesiastes from the Bible.

The crowd grew more somber as the Marines reflected on the good things that made their fallen brothers great.

"To lead a battalion of Marines into combat is a privilege of a lifetime, but it is one that comes at a great cost," Lt. Col. Seth Folsom, battalion commander, 3/7 said. "The late General Robert E. Lee once said, 'It is well that war is so terrible, or we should grow too fond of it.' Those words spoken so long ago ring true for all of us gathered here today."

The company commanders were given the opportunity to talk about the Marines lost in their companies. Even though they spoke about individual Marines, their speeches had much in common.

They spoke of the weight of their own feelings at having lost Marines under their command. They shared nicknames the fallen had within their squads and funny anecdotes of times they brought a smile to their fellow Marines' faces. They mostly talked about how

See **MEMORIAL, A7**

Gunners qualify

Photos by Lance Cpl. Ali Azimi



[Above] Marines with 3rd Light Armored Reconnaissance Battalion prepare to fire during the defensive engagement portion of their Table 6 gunner qualification May 3 at Range 500.

[Below] Marines in the light armored vehicle prepare to shoot the M242 Bushmaster at moving targets more than 1,000 meters down range.

For story and more photos, see page A8

All terrain TRAINING

LANCE CPL. D.J. WU
 COMBAT CORRESPONDENT

It is now mandatory for dirt bike and all-terrain vehicle owners to attend a dirt bike and all-terrain vehicle safety class before operating the vehicle, according to Marine Corps Order 5100.19F.

The safety classes for dirt bikes and ATVs are much like the existing Basic Rider Course for motorcycles, and have been in existence for some time now.

The big change with the recently released order is that now all owners of dirt bikes and ATVs must take the course. Previously, it was only a strongly-suggested course if there was an on-base track for riders.

The Combat Base is now equipped with instructors to teach the courses.

"We now have seven dirt bike instructors and six ATV instructors," said Bob Piirainen, manager Traffic Safety Program, Base Safety. "We've also put in the paperwork for a track to be built on base."

The two off-road riders courses are an introduction in how the off-road vehicles work and

how to safely operate them.

"We have guys who are experienced riders who still learn a lot from the class," Piirainen said. "We want riders to learn to properly ride their off-road vehicles and be safe."

The dirt bike and ATV courses are also available to dependents as well. Children at least the age of six can take the course.

Off-road sports are gaining popularity in the West Coast for the Marine Corps, and there is now more opportunity for mishap, Piirainen said. "We've had guys go to private off-road track and ride with professional riders," Piirainen said. "We want to set up more opportunities like that and give off-roaders a place to ride."

Another change the MCO 5100.19F instituted is a mandatory safety class for land utility vehicles. The safety office is working on starting that project soon.

Base Safety is still working on completing the requirements for being able to offer those classes a swell.

Dirt bike and ATV riders can contact Base Safety, building 1447 to sign up for the required classes and by calling 830-6154 or stopping by their offices.

Combat Center Fire Department

NATIONAL ARSON AWARENESS WEEK



The Marine Corps Air Ground Combat Center has experienced multiple child fire setting activities in an around family housing play parks in recent months. Youth fire setting is not just a local problem; it is a problem affecting communities nation-wide.

May 6th through the 12th is NATIONAL ARSON AWARENESS WEEK

this year's focus is on Youth Fire setting.

Stay alert - call 9-1-1 to report children playing with fire.

Please give the attached flyer widest distribution.

For additional information call **COMBAT CENTER FIRE ADMINISTRATION AT (760) 830-5400**

OFF-LIMITS ESTABLISHMENTS

MCIWest off-limits establishments guidance prohibits service members from patronizing the following locations. This order applies to all military personnel.

Local off-limits guidance prohibits service members from patronizing the following locations.

In Oceanside:

- Angelo's Kars, 222 S. Coast Hwy, Oceanside, Calif., 92054
- Angelo's Kars, 226 S. Coast Hwy, Oceanside, Calif., 92054

In San Diego:

- Club Mustang, 2200 University Ave.
- Club San Diego, 3955 Fourth St.
- Get It On Shoppe, 3219 Mission Blvd.
- Main Street Motel, 3494 Main St.
- Vulcan Baths, 805 W. Cedar St.

In National City:

- Dream Crystal, 15366 Highland Ave.
- Sports Auto Sales, 1112 National City Blvd.

In Twentynine Palms:

- Adobe Smoke Shop, 6441 Adobe Rd.
- STC Smoke Shop, 6001 Adobe Rd.
- K Smoke Shopp, 5865A Adobe Rd.

In Yucca Valley:

- Yucca Tobacco Mart, 57602 29 Palms Hwy.
- Puff's Tobacco Mart, 57063 29 Palms Hwy.

In Palm Springs:

- Village Pub, 266 S. Palm Canyon Dr.

For the complete orders, but not off-limits, check out the Combat Center's official website at <http://www.marines.mil/units/29palms>

HOT TOPIC

HIRING OUR HEROES

A job fair for active military members, Guard and Reserve members and military spouses will be held at The Venetian, 3355 Las Vegas Boulevard South, Las Vegas. The Hiring Our Heroes job fair will be held May 17 from 9 a.m. to 2 p.m. It is a free hiring fair for employers and job seekers. Register at hoh.greatjobs.net. For assistance registering, contact hiringourheroes@usc.hamber.com.

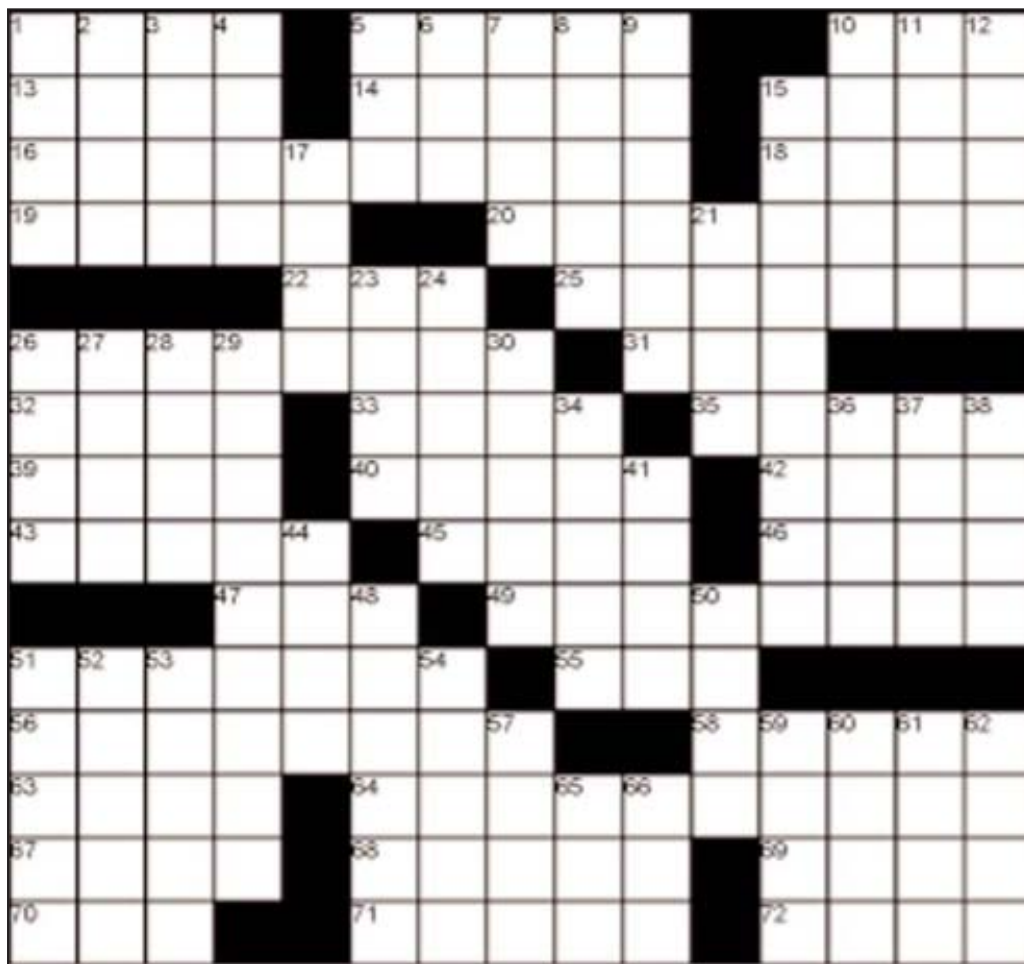
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PUZZLES COURTESY OF © 2011 HOMETOWN CONTENT

I'VE GOT A CODE

See answers on page A5



ACROSS

- "A ___ formality"
- Of a pelvic bone
- Stashed away
- Tennis great Lendl
- Aqua ___ (gold dissolver)
- Put to the grindstone
- Life during a power outage?
- Writer Sarah ___ Jewett
- Linda Ellerbee's "___ It Goes"
- Sowed again
- Prefix with natal
- Two-sport man Deion
- Henrik Ibsen drama
- Legendary big bird
- Mob chief
- School founded by Henry VI
- Dry Italian wine
- Make stout
- More achy
- "Mila 18" author
- Built for speed
- One of The Three Bears
- Stink to high heaven
- When doubled, an African antelope
- Natural environments
- Shoe pads
- Novelist Deighton
- Wine server
- "Over There" composer
- Jim Croce's "___ a Name"
- Long, long poem?
- Kicks a grounder
- Get down pat
- Bowls over
- Anonymous John
- Surrealist Max
- Post-Mardi Gras period

DOWN

- Easily split mineral
- Politico Bayh
- South African cash
- Goes no further
- Ill temper
- NASA moon craft
- Humpbacked helper
- Hospital helpers
- Salad choice
- Huge swarm
- City or circle preceder
- Monopoly stack
- Farmer's handiwork at Wimbledon?
- Huey of Louisiana politics
- Seth's son
- Peepers
- In the lead
- Toxins banned in the '70s
- Jurist Warren
- Blunted sword
- Arrays at the Cheerios factory?
- Bar Mitzvah reading
- Neighbor of Tibet
- Gazetteer datum
- ___ Cong
- Igloo dwellers: Abbr.
- Broccoli ___
- Ceramist's oven
- Stovetop whistler
- Pizarro victim
- "___ a Thousand Times"(1955 Jack Palance film)
- The "N" in UNCF
- Beat the goalie
- Urban conduit
- Parti-colored horse
- Like the Sabin vaccine
- Hockey great Gordie
- Yemeni seaport
- Arboreal abode
- Decade divs.

SAN BERNARDINO COUNTY FIRE DEPARTMENT HAZARDOUS MATERIALS DIVISION NOTICE OF AVAILABILITY FOR REVIEW OF A RISK MANAGEMENT PLAN (RMP)

NOTICE IS HEREBY GIVEN IN ACCORDANCE WITH SECTION 25535.2 OF CHAPTER 6.95 OF THE CALIFORNIA HEALTH & SAFETY CODE, THAT THE HAZARDOUS MATERIALS DIVISION OF THE SAN BERNARDINO COUNTY FIRE DEPARTMENT HAS DETERMINED THAT THE RISK MANAGEMENT PLAN (RMP) FOR THE STORAGE OF AQUEOUS AMMONIA 19% AT MARINE CORPS AIR GROUND COMBAT CENTER, LOCATED IN TWENTYNINE PALMS, IS COMPLETE AND WILL BE AVAILABLE FOR REVIEW AND COMMENT BY INTERESTED PERSONS AND PUBLIC GROUPS FROM MAY 14TH, 2012 UNTIL JUNE 27TH, 2012.

FOR AN APPOINTMENT TO REVIEW THE RMP, PLEASE CONTACT THE HAZARDOUS MATERIALS DIVISION AT (909) 386-8401, 620 S. E STREET, SAN BERNARDINO, CA 92415-0153 MONDAY THROUGH FRIDAY BETWEEN 8:00 A.M. AND 5:00 P.M.

ALL COMMENTS SHALL BE SUBMITTED IN WRITING TO: RMP COORDINATOR, HAZARDOUS MATERIALS DIVISION, 620 S. E STREET, SAN BERNARDINO, CA 92415-0153 NO LATER THAN 5:00 P.M. ON JUNE 27TH, 2012.

Relax with the paper

Wednesdays and Saturdays with the Hi-Desert Star
Thursdays with The Desert Trail
Fridays with The Observation Post



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Whatever you're looking for, you can find it in the **Observation Post Classified section**

WHAT I'VE LEARNED

THE CLIMBER

Sgt. Thomas Lugo

Radio Operator
3rd Light Armored Reconnaissance Battalion
28, Kealahou, Hawaii

INTERVIEWED AND PHOTOGRAPHED BY
CPL. WILLIAM J. JACKSON
May 9, 2012

> **My dad raised me** and he embedded into my mind that I was going to be a Marine. Period.

> **By the time I was of age** to join, I was having a real hard time. I was kicked out because the recruiters found out I had a felony. It was a whole mess.

> **I went back to** community college to do a high school completion program and I got my diploma. I went back to my

recruiter and threw it on his desk.

> **I hurt my back and was evacuated** from country four months into a deployment. I ended up part of Wounded Warriors in San Diego, and they eventually moved me here to Twentynine Palms.

> **A big thing that's preached** with any injury is the more active you are, the more your body will help itself to heal. That was one reason why they pushed doing things as an entire detachment.

> **Routes have to** change all the time, you know?

> **Climbing really opened** my eyes to knowing how special this place is.

> **Every Friday** we would go to Joshua Tree to get everybody physically active. I got up on a wall, on this crack, and I loved it immediately.

> **Right before I got my pad**, I didn't know how dangerous climbing could be. I was only a few feet off the ground, and I slipped and sprained my ankle in a hole. I struggled to get to my car and struggled to drive back home.

> **After I got** my pad I climbed every day. Literally every day.

> **I've climbed with people** from Sweden, from Iceland and from England.

> **It seems to be growing.** There are a lot of states I wouldn't think about. Like Oklahoma there's a lot of climbing, Texas is one of the top spots in the world. All of these places you wouldn't think people climb.

> **I used to go looking** for white chalk on the rocks just off the road. As soon as I saw that I would search the area and just find stuff that didn't look heavily climbed. I started sticking to really chalked up spots, you know?

> **I was in here drawing hieroglyphs** or whatever you call them. It got me really focused.

> **I have a pretty high** pain tolerance. If I'm in pain I'll push through it. Once it's there it's either going to go away or it's not. With climbing it doesn't go away, really. You have to learn to deal with it. This is going to happen, and you just do it.

> **That pain** is always there, but this seems to help me. Climbing is a lot of core muscles, and it's really been effective.

> **It's really helped me** to be healthy. It helps me to stay away from smoking and drinking, but you have to stick with it at least.

> **If I go** somewhere else and there wasn't climbing, I'm building. I already started collecting sets. I'm going to build a wall.

> **I always want to get to** that next level. I want to get deep into it. I think anybody that climbs is only really thinking about their next move.

> **Beta is a term we use** when a friend is helping you out. They tell you, you know 'Put your foot a little higher.' When you get down you're like thanks for the beta man.

> **I took my wife climbing**, she really loved it. She said she wanted to continue, and I immediately went out and bought her shoes.

> **I usually click** in pretty quick. All I need is one meeting with somebody to kind of give me one or two tips, and I'm golden.

> **I actually talked to a friend** about opening a climbing wall. I love it that much.



Gettin' on with



Story by
Lance Cpl. Chelsea Flowers

Veteran Sgt. Robert "Bobby" Norman first met his future wife, Melissa, when they were kids while playing baseball with her older brother.

They dated on and off for years while Norman, a Shawnee, Okla., native, served in the Marine Corps as an infantryman from 1997 until 2001.

Norman left the Corps in 2001 to pursue his dream of playing college baseball, with plans to enter Officer Candidate School at Marine Corps Base Quantico, Va., in February 2008.

But all those plans changed when Norman got in a motorcycle accident in 2007 that left him with a broken back, three broken ribs and a paralyzed left arm.

Suddenly, the Marine veteran, baseball player and fire and rescue volunteer found himself unable to do many of the things he once loved.

"It's either roll over and die or get on with life," Norman said. "It wasn't long after that I realized I was awarded a second chance. It may be tougher to do the everyday things, but at least I can."

So, continuing his life as best as he could was just what Norman decided to do.

The first thing Norman did was reunite with the woman he had loved most of his life. When Norman asked Melissa to marry him, he held up his limp left arm and said, "This is how it's going to be."

But for Melissa, the accident didn't make a difference.

"It didn't in any way change how I felt about him," Melissa said. "I mean, I've been in love with that boy since I was like 14. I met him when I was eight and decided I was going to marry him after our first date when I was 17. He was just minus an arm. It didn't change who he was as far as his personality and his heart."

The next few years meant a lot of adjustments for the young couple and even more for Norman.

"It was frustrating at first, but where there's a will, there's a way," Norman said. "I've always gotten it done. It may take me 10 times longer, but I'll get it done."

Over time Norman began to adjust to the change in his life. But in September 2009, Norman faced a whole new adjustment when Melissa gave birth to their first child, Taelyr.

"At first, Bobby was worried because he would never be able to throw her up in the air and wondered

how he was going to teach her to play softball," Melissa said. "But he's found a way to do everything. I mean, this little girl doesn't know anything different. She has no idea he is missing an arm. She just knows that's her dad. It doesn't matter to her at all."

Even with only one functioning arm, being a dad came naturally to Norman. After eight weeks, Melissa returned to work and Norman stayed home for several months to take care of Taelyr. That meant

continuing to live an active life.

But individuals with the Challenged Athletes Foundation contacted Norman and told him about the possibility of playing adaptive sports. Now, just eight months after the amputation, Norman competed on the All-Marine Warrior Games team in Colorado Springs, Colo., against other injured, wounded and ill service members from all the military branches.

"After the amputation I was really down in the dumps for two or three months, and it wasn't until after I talked to the sports people that I really began to pull myself out of it," Norman said. "The spirit of competition and the camaraderie of being back with a bunch of Marines has been phenomenal as far as my rehabilitation goes."

Even Melissa has noticed a change in Norman since he's begun playing sports again. "He came home with a whole new spark about him," Melissa said.

At the Marine Corps Trials at Camp Pendleton, Calif., in March and the Warrior Games this past week, Norman competed in both track and swimming competitions with two gold and one bronze medal in swimming.

"Getting back into sports is so therapeutic for me," Norman said. "The Warrior Games and the Marine Corps Trials have been such a blessing to me. I've made a 180-degree turn as far as my physical ability. I'm in so much better shape. I feel better at the end of the day and the stronger my back gets, the less it hurts. I'm not even halfway there yet."

Now Norman is even more motivated to continue to live his life to the fullest.

"I want to work with kids and maybe one day I'll be where I can work with disabled kids or wounded warriors," Norman said.

Until then, when Norman's not maintaining the sports facilities at Oklahoma Baptist University, he can be found on his farm in Oklahoma riding horses with Taelyr and Melissa or tinkering on cars.

"I'm just so proud of him," Melissa said. "He drives me every day. He's the reason I get up and go to work every day and strive to be the best mom I can be because he is the very best dad, the very best husband, the very best son and the very best friend to everybody. He is so selfless."



CPL. DANIEL WETZEL

Sgt. Bobby Norman swings around his daughter Taelyr at the playground on Fort Carson in Colorado Springs, Colo., May 3. Initially, Norman was concerned about being able to care for his daughter after losing his arm in a motorcycle accident, but he has found ways to care for and love his family regardless.

making bottles, doing laundry and changing diapers – all with one arm. If at first Norman couldn't do it, he'd figure out a way to do it, Melissa said.

Then in August 2011, since limb salvage attempts failed, doctors amputated Norman's arm and fused his humerus to his scapula.

Initially, this new change was difficult for Norman. There was now no chance of ever getting the use of his arm back and Norman thought there was no hope of

Through DUST and Heat

Cpl. Timothy Lenzo, 1st Marine Division

■ Afghan National Army leads operations to success

TREK NAWA, Afghanistan —The people in Trek Nawa, an area between the Marjah and Nawa district, were witnesses to an unusual sight April 23-26. The Afghan National Army dispatched about 190 soldiers from various tolais within 1st Kandak, 1st Brigade, 215th Corps, to areas throughout the expanding landscape. During this maneuver, Marines with 2nd Battalion, 6th Marine Regiment partnered with the kandak to clear the area during the Afghan-led Operation High Noon 15.

To reach their objectives, Afghan soldiers with their Marine counterparts often hiked through a range of open, dry, dusty ground to lush green fields in knee-high plants.

During the operation, three Afghan tolais patrolled from north to south, clearing the area, while searching for weapon caches and improvised explosive devices.

A fourth tolai supported the operation by blocking the escape routes of possible insurgents.

"The Marines' role in the operation was a supporting one," said ANA 1st Sgt. Mubarak, the operations first sergeant with the kandak.

A Marine platoon accompanied each tolai during the operation, providing extra firepower, and logistical support.

"Our mission was to follow and support," said 1st. Lt. Joseph Hoeksema, a platoon commander with Weapons Co. "I helped if they needed it, but it was an ANA-led operation."

Hoeksema's platoon accompanied the Weapons tolai during the operation.

"(The ANA) planned the patrols, searched the houses and talked to the local people," said ANA 1st Lt. Qeyashkhan, the executive officer with Weapons tolai.

After several hours of clearing the northern part of the area, Qeyashkhan decided to establish a temporary patrol

base in a local compound. Marines and Afghan soldiers soaked in sweat, from the intense heat of an unfiltered Afghan sun, as they set up their command center, security posts and radios. They had hiked about eight miles before they reached their resting point.

"It was really hot and we were running low on water," said Qeyashkhan. "The first priority was getting resupplied with water and food for the next couple days."

The ANA established their patrol base near a major road that provided

with the ETT.

Walker added that they also did a great job getting supplies to the troops and coordinating with each other.

On day two of the operation the tolais conducted partnered patrols with the Marines. Afghan squads, intermixed with Marines, went through the surrounding areas, talking to locals and clearing houses.

"This is an (insurgent) hotspot and we've been engaged by as many as 10 insurgents, found IEDs, weapons caches, you name it," said Hoeksema, a native of

caches, IEDs and detaining a suspected insurgent leader.

"We tried to flood the area with ANA presence," said Walker, a native of Morganton, N.C. "The patrols allowed the (ANA) to get a better feel for the area and talk to more locals."

On the third day the tolais continued south, while still clearing the area, before returning to Patrol Base Jersey.

The landscape around PB Jersey is sparse with fields lined of cracks that go on for several miles. With the clouds providing some relief from the glowing sun, one by one the different tolais arrived at base camp along with their supporting Marines.

The kandak planned for this operation for nearly two weeks. After three days, about 190 troops returned without a single casualty and captured a suspected insurgent leader.

As the last of the patrols arrived at PB Jersey, sweat dripping from their chin, smiles were on both Afghan and Marine faces. The operation, planned by the kandak with minimal Marine influence had run smoothly and one of the most active insurgent areas had been successfully neutralized without any losses.

"They did well," said Hoeksema. "They planned it all and executed it accordingly."

"This is an (insurgent) hotspot and we've been engaged by as many as 10 insurgents, found IEDs, weapons caches, you name it,"

— 1st. Lt. Joseph Hoeksema

Afghan resupply trucks easy access to the soldiers. They chose roads that their route clearing patrols could drive through. Route clearing vehicles are specially equipped trucks designed to find and clear IEDs so others can drive safely on the road.

"Some routes are too narrow to get our trucks through so we worked with the Embedded Training Team to find the routes we could go through," said Mubarak.

The logistics of getting supplies to the patrol bases and the communication between different tolais was a focus prior to the operation.

"Operationally, they are ready to fight, ready to go out there, and I think they do a pretty good job," said Capt. Stephen Walker, the operations advisor

Davenport, Iowa.

Marines and ANA soldiers were seen traversing the terrain throughout the day, jumping over wadeis, an irrigation system for the field, and going from compound to compound under the blistering sun.

The patrols walked through fields, some blooming with poppy, others dried up from the heat.

Some tolais didn't find much; however, their presence in the area was enough to scare off any insurgents.

"We didn't find any caches or IEDs, but we talked to locals and let them know we are here for them," said Qeyashkhan.

The cracked earth was pounded by both Marine and Afghan boots as they continued to patrol throughout the day. Other tolais had more success finding

Editor's note: Second Battalion, 6th Marine Regiment, is part of Regimental Combat Team 5, 1st Marine Division (Forward), which works in partnership with the Afghan National Security Forces and the Government of the Islamic Republic of Afghanistan to conduct counterinsurgency operations. The unit is dedicated to securing the Afghan people, defeating insurgent forces and enabling ANSF assumption of security responsibilities within its area of operations in order to support the expansion of stability, development and legitimate governance.

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MEMORIAL, from A1

much they will be missed.

Maj. Gen. Ronald Bailey, commanding general, 1st Marine Division, and Brig. Gen. George W. Smith Jr., commanding general, Marine Corps Air Ground Combat Center Twentynine Palms, also paid their respects to each of the fallen Marines.

After the battalion sergeant major, Sgt. Maj. Rafael Rodriguez gave a role call with seven names

left unanswered and the 21-gun salute fired off, the families of the fallen were the first to spend precious moments in front of their Marines' battlefield crosses.

The entire battalion then passed in front of the crosses to say goodbye to their comrades. Some said it with a silent salute. Some wept and some held back their tears to comfort others.

Others needed to take a knee to say a few more private words to their friends.



DIANE DURDEN



DIANE DURDEN

[Left] Marlene Shaw (left), mother of Cpl. Christopher Singer, and his wife, Brooke Singer, place a red carnation on the base of the battlefield cross, honoring their loved ones moments after the ceremony.

[Above] Lance Cpl. Jamal Boykins, mortorman, 3/7, leads a small detail of Marines with M16A2 service rifles in placing the first elements of the battlefield crosses.

AWARD, from A1

commitment of Americans to everything we value: honor, equal opportunity, resiliency, leadership and integrity," he said.

Battaglia recognized the contributions the enlisted force has made during the past decade of conflict, noting as examples special operators "who risk much to ensure that our adversaries bring no harm" and National Guard members who provide immediate response to their communities when natural disasters strike.

He also remembered enlisted warriors "who gave the full devotion of duty and now lie in formations within hallowed grounds of our cemeteries," and acknowledged the unwavering support of military families whose support is vital to the military's success.

As Sen. Chuck Hagel, president of the Atlantic Council and an enlisted soldier during the Vietnam war, presented the award, Battaglia shared the stage with representatives of each service: Army Staff Sgt. Tanner Welch; Marine Corps Staff Sgt. Serena Anderson; Navy Petty Officer 1st Class Curtis Robinson; Air Force Tech. Sgt. Lisa Tomlinson; and Coast Guard Petty Officer 2nd Class Lisa Pique.

Prince Harry of Great Britain, accepted the Distinguished Humanitarian Leadership Award for work he and his brother, The Duke of Cambridge, conduct for wounded British servicemen and women and veterans. He extended his personal con-

gratulations to Battaglia and the U.S. armed forces for their "peerless contribution to the defense of freedom."

Harry, a captain in the British army, said he witnessed those contributions firsthand while deployed to Afghanistan. "It was a privilege for me to fight alongside members of the United States armed forces," he told the gathering. "Their professionalism and dedication to the values we share and hold dear are inspirational."

Speaking with American Forces Press Service after the ceremony, Battaglia said he felt like a lottery-winner, albeit it without the monetary gain, to be able to accept the award on behalf of all enlisted members and NCOs. "Saying it is an absolute honor might be an understatement at this point in time," he said. "If I had to put some kind of price on it, I'd have to call it priceless."

While expressing appreciation for the Atlantic Council's formal recognition, he said he's not surprised that the American people continue to stand solidly behind their military.

"Noncommissioned officers and our enlisted force have always measured up," he said. "And when the stakes got really high after 9/11 and during the past 10 years, they have really carried a big burden on their shoulders and showed their mettle."

Receipt of the Distinguished Military Leadership Award sends a strong message to the men and women in uniform, he said. "America, our society respects and admires the hard work

and sacrifices you and your families do each and every day," he said.

"So keep up the great work that you are doing," he continued. "And when it comes time to making decisions – and they are very, very hard decisions that you will make – the right decision is never-wavering the moral, ethical high ground."

Marine Corps Lance Cpl. Thomas Mooney, serving at the Marine Corps Warfighting Laboratory in Quantico, Va., said he felt honored to attend the ceremony and experience the outpouring of support firsthand.

"It's great to see such support from such a large, diverse audience," agreed Air Force Tech. Sgt. Jason Hesbol, an aide to Battaglia. "It's humbling as well," he said. "As you can see, there's a lot of pride."

Also during last night's ceremony, the U.N. secretary-general received this year's Distinguished International Leadership Award for his success in mobilizing international leaders around global challenges.

Ban Ki-moon used last night's ceremony as a platform to lament "a deficit of leadership" from the international community to end the bloodshed in Syria and to announce an increase in U.N. observers there.

The United Nations will deploy its full complement of 300 military observers and 100 civilians to Syria by June, he announced. The U.N. currently has 59 military monitors and about the same number of civilians on the ground.



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<http://www.youtube.com/CombatCenterPAO>

FIRE THE 242s

3rd LAR tests LAV skills with annual qualification

Story and photos by
Lance Cpl. Ali Azimi

The sound of the M242 was deafening when it fired from the LAV. It echoed throughout the range. Inside the vehicle, the sound reverberated off the metal walls, increasing its volume. Metal shells fell to the ground after every sabot round was fired.

Marines with 3rd Light Armored Reconnaissance Battalion qualified in Table 6 of gunner qualifications at Range 500, May 3. Marines completed both offensive and defensive engagements, shooting at mobile targets more than 1,000 meters downrange with their light armored vehicles.

Table 6 consisted of night and day portions, six engagements in the day followed by four at night. Crews were evaluated on their ability to identify their targets and hit their mark using the proper weapons system that corresponded with the type of target. The LAVs shot both in stationary positions and on the move.

“There’s really no substitute for doing live fire practice and that’s the only way you can really train for combat,” said 2nd Lt. Evan S. Munsing, platoon commander, 3rd LAR. “We have the (Advanced Gunnery Training System), which is a computer simulation inside of a building. It’s good and helps you prepare for the range, but the only real way to get the feel of the driving and putting rounds down range is to actually execute the range itself, get familiar with your weapons system and how to employ it.”

The first portion was the defensive

engagement. The LAVs drove up to a berm, facing down range.

As the vehicle stood at the top of the berm, ready to fire, it was in the hot position. After firing, it would recede to behind the berm for cover, known as the cold position. The Marines would then acquire their next target and move back up the berm. This process was repeated until all the targets were taken down.

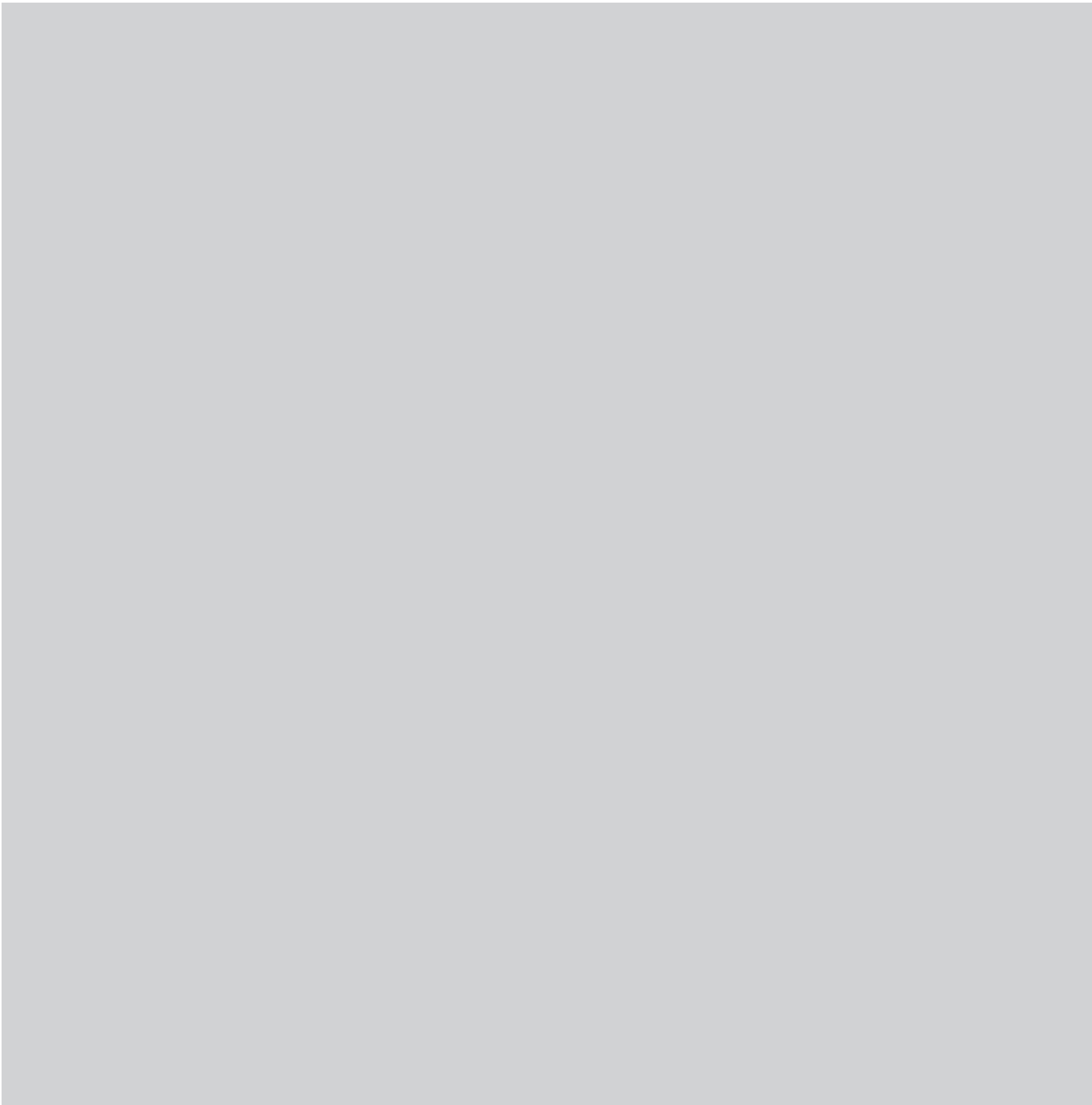
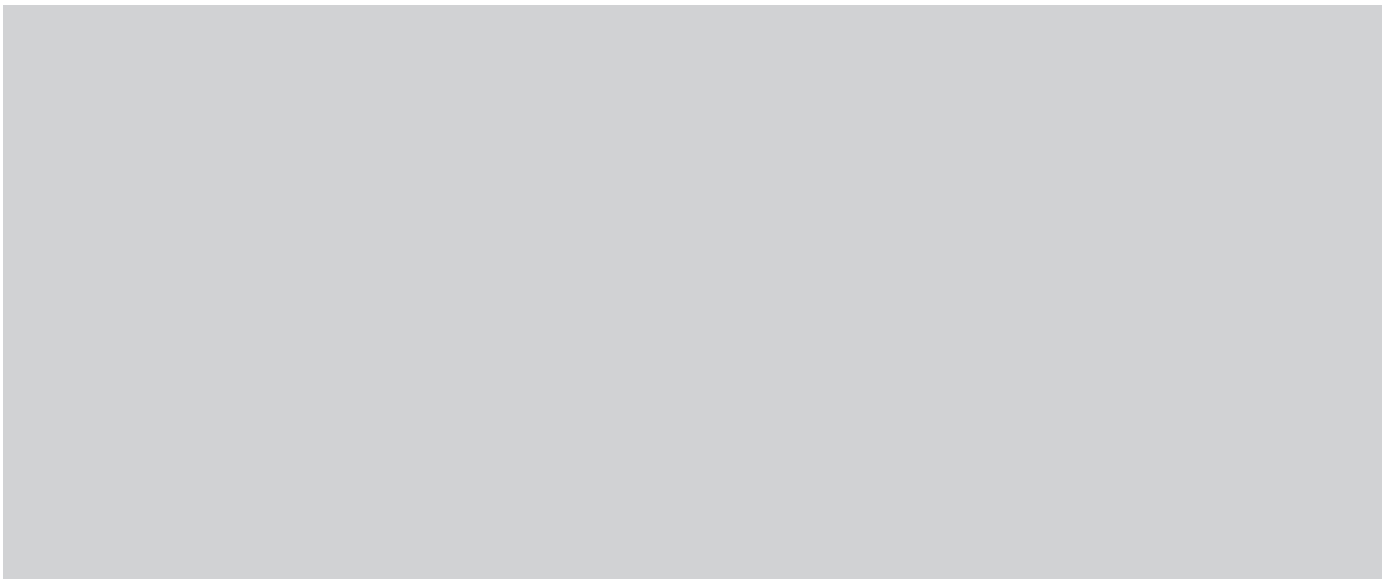
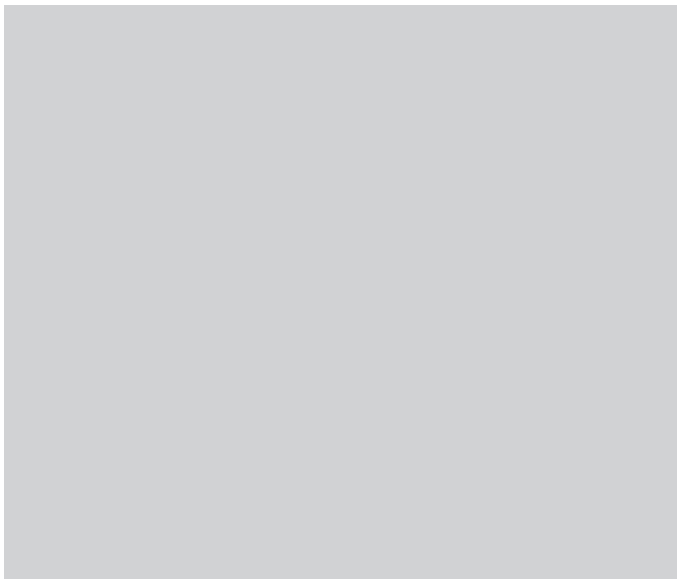
Their hits and misses were recorded both visually and electronically. While the LAVs shot, up in a tower behind them, their shooting was evaluated. Marines sitting at the top of the tower used an electronic telescope to see the targets being fired on down range.

The targets also had sensors attached, recording every hit and sending the information to contractors running the range.

The next portion of the table was the offensive engagement. The LAVs moved both laterally and downrange shooting at the targets as they popped up.

With the completion of the offensive engagement, the 3rd LAR Marines were done with the day portion of Table 6. The next was the night, where Marines had to hit their targets in the dark, using thermal vision systems to guide them.

“Practice makes perfect,” said Lance Cpl. Austin Richard, gunner, 3rd LAR, after completing the offensive engagement portion. “The more practice you get, the more experience you get; the better you get.”





Parks and Recreation

29 Palms edition



Story and Photos by **Lance Cpl. Ali Azimi**

The Combat Center is not just a training environment but a family environment as well. It is the home to both service members and their families. To accommodate the family community, the Combat Center hosts a number of outdoor areas for families to spend time together or with their pets.

Inside the gates of the installation there are 55 playgrounds and parks, four dog parks and a water park. Within these areas there are 20 barbecue areas and two gazebo areas all open to families for cooking or picnicking outdoors.

In addition to these recreational areas, the Combat Center's Outdoor Adventures provides families with sports and camping equipment for trips and recreational activities. All the equipment is available to rent for any

military identification card holders.

Behind the Outdoor Adventures area lays stables, where equestrians can keep their horses. The stable provides a cheap easy way to keep the largest family pet close to home for everyday use.

The park areas are open for use anytime between the hours of 6 a.m. to 10 p.m. Patrons must clean up after themselves and any children under ages 10 must be accompanied by a parent.

The dog parks are open during the day hours. Dogs less than one year old and children under 6 years old are prohibited from entering the parks. Owners must also pick up after their pets.

For more information contact Lincoln Military housing at 760-830-4500.



[Top] Greyson Phipps, 9 months old, son of Maj. Tyler Phipps, communications officer, Regimental Combat Team 7, cools off at the Combat Center's water park May 7.

[Center] Harley, a miniature pincher, curls under the leg of his owner, Lance Cpl. Jessilynn Yaeger, administration clerk, Headquarters Battalion, while playing at the Joshua Heights Dog Park May 7.

[Bottom Right] Sgt. Guillermo Martinez, student with Marine Corps Communications-Electronics School, relaxes with his wife, Liz, and 1-year-old daughter, Ellie, at Victory Park May 7.



Liberty Call

Combat Center Clubs

Excursions Enlisted Club

Friday: Social Hour with food, 5 - 7 p.m. followed by DJ Gjettblaque, 8 - 11 p.m., Ladies Night
Saturday: Variety Night, DJ Gjettblaque 8 - 11 p.m.
Thursday: Social Hour, 7:30 - 9:30 p.m.

Bloodstripes NCO Club

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

Hashmarks 29 SNCO Club

Friday: Social Hour, 5:30 - 7:30 p.m.
Monday-Friday: All-hands lunch from 10:30 a.m. - 1:30 p.m.
Monday: Steak night and full menu, 4:30 - 8 p.m.
Tuesday: Social Hour, 5 - 7 p.m.
Thursday: Social Hour, 5 - 7 p.m.

Combat Center Officers' Club

Monday: Steak night, 5 - 7:30 p.m.
Monday-Friday: All-hands lunch, from 11 a.m. - 1:30 p.m.
Thursday: Taco Night, 5 - 7 p.m.

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

Local Events

A Little Murder Never Hurt Anybody

When: Every Friday & Saturday from May 4 to June 2
Where: Theatre 29
736377 Sullivan Rd., Twentynine Palms, Calif.
For tickets and information call 316-4151
or visit <http://www.theatre29.org>

Free Line Dance Lessons

Learn to dance to traditional country music
When: 5 - 9 p.m., every Sunday
Where: Willie Boy's Saloon and Dance Hall
50048 29 Palms Hwy, Morongo Valley, Calif.
For more information, call 363-3343.

Stan Ridgway

American multi-instrumental singer-songwriter
When: 5 - 9 p.m., Friday May 11
Where: Pappy and Harriets Pioneertown Palace
53688 Pioneertown Rd., Poinneertown, Calif.
For more informaito, call 365-5956

Lower Desert

Tony Bennett

Legendary entertainer sings live
When: 9 p.m., Friday, May 11
Where: Morongo Casino Resort and Spa
49500 Seminole Drive, Cabazon, Calif.
For more information call 800-252-4499 or visit
<http://www.morongocasinoresort.com>.

Dwight Yoakam

Country music star live
When: 8 p.m., Friday, May 25
Where: Spotlight 29 Casino Resort
46-200 Harrison Place, Coachella, Calif.
For more information call 866-377-6829 or visit
<http://www.spotlight29.com>.

Sugarland

Country group live in concert
When: 9 p.m., Saturday, May 25
Where: Agua Caliente
32-250 Bob Hope Dr., Rancho Mirage
For more information call 888-999-1995 or visit
<http://hotwatercasino.com>.

Joan Sebastian

Grammy Award-winning Mexican singer, songwriter
When: 8 p.m., Saturday, June 16
Where: Fantasy Springs Resort Casino
84-245 Indio Springs Parkway, Indio
For more information call 800-827-2946 or visit
<http://www.fantasyspringsresort.com>.

Sunset Cinema

Friday, May 11

6 p.m. - Wrath of the Titans, Rated PG-13
9 p.m. - 21 Jump Street, Rated R
Midnight - Silent House, Rated R

Saturday, May 12

10:30 a.m. - Free Matinee The Smurfs, Rated PG
12:30 p.m. - A Thousand Words, Rated PG-13
3 p.m. - Wrath of the Titans 3D, Rated PG-13
6 p.m. - John Carter, Rated PG-13
9 p.m. - The Hunger Games, Rated PG-13
Midnight - American Reunion, Rated R

Sunday, May 13

12:30 p.m. - Mirror Mirror, Rated PG
3 p.m. - The Hunger Games, Rated PG-13
6 p.m. - Wrath of the Titans 3D, Rated PG-13
9 p.m. - American Reunion, Rated R

Monday, May 14

7 p.m. - A Thousand Words, Rated PG-13

Tuesday, May 15

7 p.m. - Wrath of the Titans 3D, Rated PG-13

Wednesday, May 16

5:30 p.m. - John Carter, Rated PG-13
8:30 p.m. - 21 Jump Street, Rated R

Thursday, May 17

5:30 p.m. - A Thousand Words, Rated PG-13
8:30 p.m. - Silent House, Rated R

Marvel Comics superheroes unite in mission to save Earth



COURTESY PHOTO

If you're looking to stretch your movie-superhero dollar, here's some serious blockbuster bang for your cinema buck. The superhero squad is assembled by yet another Marvel Comics character, Nick Fury (Samuel L. Jackson), the director of an international agency charged with protecting the planet.

NEIL POND

"The Avengers"

Starring Robert Downey Jr, ChrisHemsworth, and Samuel L. Jackson
Directed by Josh Whedon
PG-13, 142min.

"The Avengers," the long-anticipated Hollywood coalition of several Marvel Comics do-gooders into one star-packed constellation, lines up Thor, Captain America, Iron Man, The Incredible Hulk and supporting players Hawkeye and Black Widow for a mega-mission to save the Earth from an army of intergalactic marauders.

The "Avengers" buzz has been building in the superhero-verse for several years, but it really grew to a rumble with the rollout of recent movies built around Thor, Captain America and Iron Man, which all funneled into

the Avengers storyline.

With only one exception (Mark Ruffalo, the latest actor to portray Dr. Bruce Banner, who morphs into the rampaging Hulk whenever he gets riled), all the key players reprise their roles from previous outings.

Robert Downey Jr. returns as Iron Man, the metal-clad, rocket-powered alter ego of billionaire industrialist genius playboy Tony Stark.

Chris Hemsworth is Thor, the Norse god of thunder, whose troublemaking, power-hungry step-brother, Loki (Tim Hiddleston, a terrific villain also back for an encore), orchestrates a takeover of Earth as part of a larger plan of cosmic dominance.

Chris Evans brings back some gung-ho, red-white-and-blue gusto as Captain America, thrust into the modern world via a time warp

at the end of his previous World War II-era adventure.

Hawkeye (Jeremy Renner), a master archer with perfect vision and a quiver of surprises, and the beautiful but deadly Black Widow (Scarlett Johansson) didn't get their own films to seed their "Avengers" roles, but they did whet fans' appetites with brief appearances in the "Thor" and "Iron Man 2" movies.

The superhero squad is assembled by yet another Marvel Comics character, Nick Fury (Samuel L. Jackson), the director of an international agency charged with protecting the planet.

The Avengers don't start out on harmonious footing. They're not clear why they've been summoned. They're all strangers when they meet, with differing ideas on what to do and how to do it. Barbs fly, tempers flare, and there's one super-

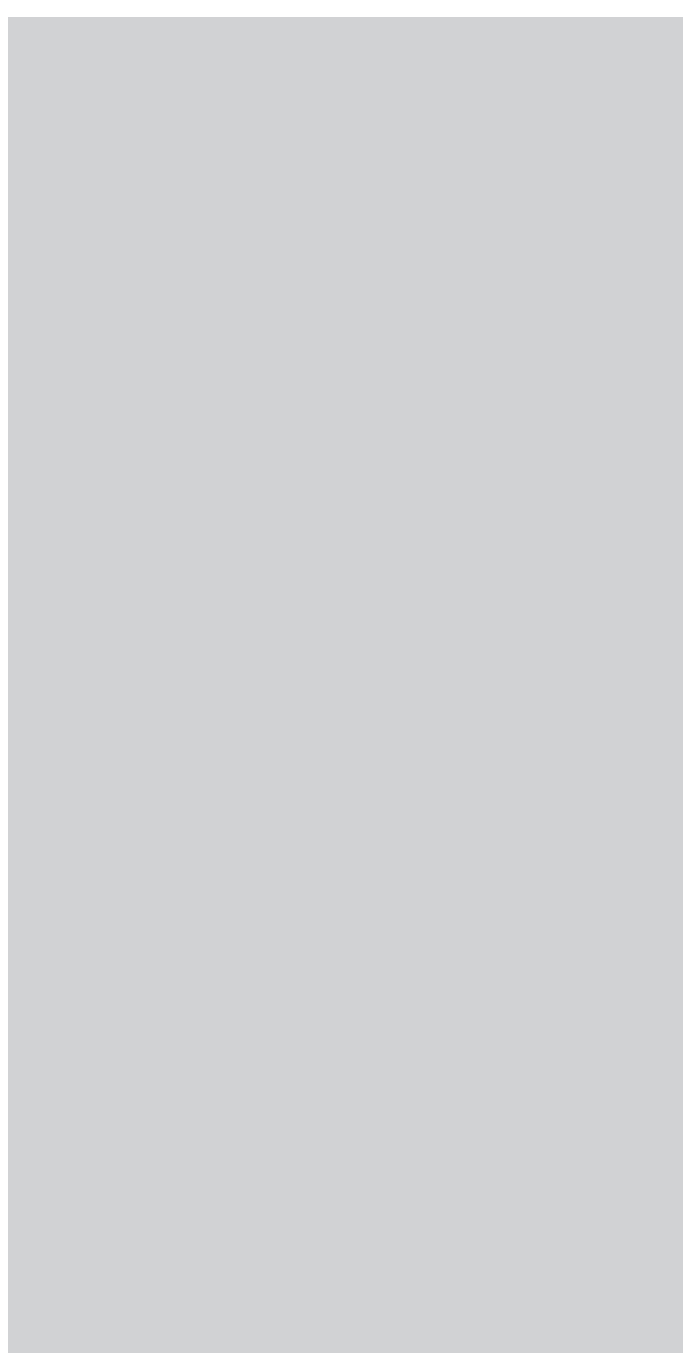
sized, three-way slugfest that turns a mountaintop forest into wood chips.

The script is clever, bright and tight, with a heartbeat about teamwork, sacrifice and the high price of peace pulsing inside its action-packed, rock-'em, sock-'em shell. Writer/director Josh Whedon does a stupendous job of juggling a big cast, big special effects and the big expectations of a fan base that's been waiting for years for this movie. They won't be disappointed.

If big-screen cinema magic spun from comic-book pulp isn't your thing, there's probably little about this chunky superhero stew you'll find seasoned to your taste. But, on the other hand, if your DNA has even a few geeky strands that occasionally enjoy a good, solid, summer strum, this movie will definitely do it---and how.



The Combat Center has its own YouTube channel
Find it at <http://www.youtube.com/user/CombatCenterPAO>.



Combat Center CHALLENGE Water Polo

Photos by Diane Durden

[Right] Kyle Taormino, goalie for Team 2/7 G, misses the block, allowing Team HQBN to score during a water polo match held at the Training Tank May 3. Water polo is one of 30 events Combat Center units will compete in during the 7th Annual Combat Center Challenge.

[Below] Jake Hawken, Team 2/7, moves up to block a pass from Garrett Campbell, Team MCCES, during a water polo match May 3.

[Bottom Right] John Martinez (left), Team 2/7 G, looks for an open teammate to pass the ball. Conor Watt (center), Team 2/7 G, moves in to block Richard Nuñez, Team HQBN.

