



OBSERVATION POST

MCAGCC TWENTYNINE PALMS
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Annual drive comes to successful close

Cpl. William J. Jackson
Combat Correspondent

The Combined Federal Campaign is a charitable-giving drive for employees in the federal workplace. It began in the early 1960s to coordinate the fundraising efforts of various charitable organizations. During 2012, the Combat Center raised more than \$300,000, an achievement the installation has never reached previously.

There are many different charities federal employees can donate to, ranging from medical research to animal rescue, veteran support agencies and science and technology. The campaign ran for three months, September to December, and attracted a total of 5,183 donors, doubling last year's record.

"It's an opportunity for federal employees to participate in a drive that helps hundreds of charities across the

"The focus of course is always on making 100 percent contact, because if you have contact it's more likely to appeal to someone and create more donors."

— Master Gunnery Sgt. Lawanda Hall

world," said Master Gunnery Sgt. Lawanda Hall, manpower staff non-commissioned officer in charge, Company A, Headquarters Battalion. "2012 turned out great. This year the Marine Air Ground Task Force Training Command raised \$323,822.91 and we more than doubled our contributors."

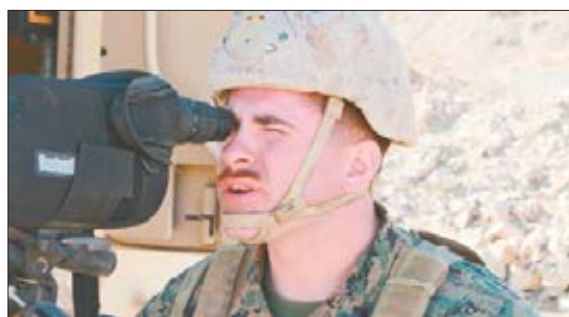
Halfway through the campaign, Hall and Col. George C. Aucoin, chief of staff, MAGTFTC, Marine Corps Air Ground Combat Center, met with each of the installations' unit commanders, sergeants major and command representatives to provide participation feedback.

"For one, we had a lot more involvement with awareness," Hall said. "We oversaw the weekly participation rate and then we pulled all of the commanders in and advised them of where they stood."

Three major events were held around the Combat Center to bring attention to the campaign.

"The focus of course is always on making 100 percent contact, because if you have contact it's more

See **CAMPAIGN** page A6



Explosive Ordnance Disposal

Technicians practice SMUD operations

Story and photos by **Cpl. William J. Jackson**
Combat Correspondent

From Mine-Resistant Ambush Protected vehicles, Explosive Ordnance Disposal Marines fired .50 caliber rifles at explosives Jan. 18 aboard the Combat Center's Range 112.

The Marines, students at the Corps' EOD Advanced Training Center, here, were learning to conduct standoff munitions disruption operations during the live-fire training scenario.

Thirteen students, all staff sergeants, are halfway through the 20-day training course before they're sent back to the operating forces. The students are scheduled to graduate Feb. 1, leaving the Combat Center with the tools needed to better train junior Marines for any situation their military occupational specialty calls for.

The students also learned to conduct post-blast analysis, where the Marines investigate blast sites to find out what type of munitions were fired, where they were fired from and what type of weapon system was used to fire the round. While deployed, these types of training scenarios can be an important factor to keeping Marines well-informed of the enemy's activities.

"We can give the unit commanders that information, like, 'This is what you're looking for, this is how far away they can shoot at you and it's over there running up and down that trail,'" said Master Sgt. Erik Swanson, EOD supervisor's course chief, Headquarters Company, Marine Corps Communication-Electronics School.

The course takes EOD technicians through informal lec-

tures in the classroom, performance-based evaluations and practical applications all to better fill EOD team leader billets in the Fleet Marine Force.

"It starts out slow. It starts out with EOD training and what it takes to run an EOD training section," Swanson said. "Then we go into military munitions rules, basically what constitutes wasted munitions or what makes it serviceable."

"We're getting into techniques to low-order detonate munitions," Swanson said. The technique is a way to safely defuse a situation when a high-order detonation could cause damage to an area, he added.

During the second week, students demonstrated SMUD operations. This technique allows EOD technicians to rapidly clear a runway. The Marines can fire 7.62 mm or .50 caliber rifles to low-order detonate the threat from a distance.

After the class fired their seven rounds on the .50 cal rifle, the students began their test on the Marine air systems remote firing device portion of the day. The MASRF is an electronic device that allows EOD technicians the ability to control a blast down to the second.

"Instead of having to run out time fuses, which give us a limited time, this we can set up and [fire it on command]," said Staff Sgt. Ian Hassing, a student in the course. "It gives us better control in case somebody comes in the area or [the situation] changes. This gets us that full control when it comes to safety."

The MASRF is a safety precaution, explained Staff Sgt. Kyle Winjum, instructor. "It's just another tool in

See **SMUD** page A6



AIR FORCE STAFF SGT. STEPHANY RICHARDS

[Above] An M1A1 Abrams tank provides suppressive fire against simulated insurgents during day 12 of the Integrated Training Exercise, Jan. 22.

[Right] Marines with 3rd Light Armored Reconnaissance Battalion drive behind defensive lines during the Mechanized Assault Course at Range 210 Jan. 22.



CPL. ALI AZIMI

For the story and more photos go to **A5**

New rules to receive Combat Action Ribbon

Cpl. Ali Azimi
Combat Correspondent

The Combat Action Ribbon is awarded to Marines who have rendered satisfactory performance under enemy fire while actively participating in a ground or surface engagement.

A revision to the requirements to receive the award has redefined what can qualify Marines for the CAR, due to Marine Administrative Message 038/13.

The award is given for engagement while under fire and in direct contact with the enemy, receiving and returning fire. The revision reflects the very real threat posed to coalition forces from improvised explosive.

These devices have become one of the biggest threats to troops in Afghanistan. Those exposed to them may be eligible to receive the CAR under its revised requirements.

Any Marine who is exposed to or is directly active in disabling, rendering safe or destroying IEDs, mines, or scatterable munitions, with or without enemy presence, is now eligible for a CAR.

These individuals are at increased risk of the effects of

these weapons, if detonated. This constitutes performance under fire if either a Marine is within close proximity of detonated munitions or neutralized it poses as a threat.

Using remote mine clearing systems or direct fire weapons to neutralize or destroy the threat from outside of the anticipated blast area does not qualify Marines to receive the CAR.

According to the MarAdmin, an active IED, mine or scatterable munition are defined as one having both a main explosive charge and functional fusing or triggering mechanism. Caches of these explosives not replaced by the enemy for detonation also do not qualify as meeting the criteria for the award.

This revision is retroactive to 2001, qualifying anyone who meets the criteria since then to receive the award.

Currently, the only authorized operation which the CAR may be awarded for is Operation Enduring Freedom. Marines can only receive the CAR once per operation, even if engaged with the enemy or munitions multiple times.

For more information refer to Marine Administrative Message 038/13.

This week in Combat Center History



Reprinted from the Observation Post dated Jan. 25, 1991 Vol. 36 Issue No. 03

MCCES Instructor of the Year named

Cpl. Jeff Howell
Observation Post

He has been described by his students as patient, thorough, knowledgeable, a hard grader, and tough but fair. He's taught privates through majors. He has 16 years of experience in his chosen field, and now CWO-3 Michael L. Ross of the Marine Corps Communication-Electronics School (MCCES), Air School, has been selected MCCES's instructor of the year for 1990.

Ross, a native of Wabash, Ind., was chosen by his contemporaries to represent the best of MCCES after an extensive, two-phase screening process which pitted him against nine of MCCES's finest instructors.

According to Master Gunnery Sgt. Richard D. Browne, MCCES operations chief, the selection process is a thorough, ongoing one, designed to insure that the right individual is chosen for the honor.

Each quarter the 10 training sections which comprise MCCES, select an instructor to represent their section. At the end of the year one instructor from each section is chosen from those quarterly recipients to represent their training section in the MCCES competition.

Phase one of the MCCES screening process consists of a critique by three board members in the actual classroom setting. During the phase, board members grade each instructor on their ability to present course material effectively.

In phase two, instructors appear before a five-member board comprised of directors from MCCES's Communications-Electronics Maintenance School, Communications-Electronics Operations School, Air School, and the directors of MCCES's Training Management and Analysis Directorate and School Operations. During this phase each board member selects a question based in the Instructional System Development Process (an instructor's guideline for teaching his students) and other instructional information, which tests their knowledge of the instructional process.

During each phase, board members grade the instructors on a scale of 75-100. Competition was close after the first phase, but Ross excelled during the second phase

scoring and average of 99.6, to give him a final, average of 98.4 and the title of MCCES Instructor of the year.

According to Browne, who was on the board and evaluated Ross, this year's competition (1990) was the strongest he has ever seen, which says a great deal about the competence of Ross. "I didn't know CWO-3 Ross prior to my evaluation of him," said Browne. "I was impressed. He really whipped it on!"

A veteran Air Defense Control Officer with 16 years experience in the field, Ross credits his success to his experience, having previously served three years as an instructor, from 1978 to 1981. He was the first officer to be selected for the honor, and is as modest about his accomplishment as he is proficient in his field.

"It's not anything I ever expected," Ross said about the award. There are a lot of good instructors here at MCCES and it's nice to have been chosen."

Though Ross says he believe there isn't anyone who wouldn't be happy about the title, he says the most rewarding thing about being instructor is that he has an opportunity to make influence what students learn.

"Having been in the fleet and seen the shortcomings of young Marines coming into the field, I have an idea what is needed," said Ross. "Being an instructor allows me an opportunity to make improvements and inject modifications at the source. I have an opportunity to mold individuals into what the fleet needs."

According to Col John W. Schwab Jr., Commanding Officer of MCCES, that opportunity is a tremendous responsibility and on the Ross bears well. "Instructor are the most critical element to the success our mission here at MCCES," Col. Schwab said. "They need to be experts in their field and be able to impart that knowledge to the students. The fact that one is singled out among nearly 300 is a pretty significant honor."

"I've known CWO-3 Ross for a long time," Col. Schwab continued, "He knows his business and he knows how to instruct. He's a savvy instructor and he richly deserves the title.

In addition to the title Ross will receive a certificate of Commendation from BGen. James E. Livingston and he will also be nominated for a Navy Achievement Medal.

Officers' Spouses' Club scholarships, grants available

Officers' Spouses' Club has scholarships and grants available for the 2013-2014 academic year.

Applicant must be a family member (child or spouse) of an active duty, active duty reservist assigned to the Combat Center (or of a retired or deceased military member) and must be residing in the Morongo Basin or Greater Palm Springs area at the time of application. High School applicants must be graduating from an MUSD or Great Palm Springs area high school, a senior registered in a home school program (who meets all other requirements) or recipient of a GED in the year of application. A spouse applicant may be currently enrolled in a college or vocational program. All applicants must have applied to an accredited 2

or 4-year institution for undergraduate study and be working toward an AA or BA/BS degree or vocational certification.

Twenty-nine Palms OSC scholarship recipients from previous years or recipients of funds from any other installation OSC are not eligible. See applications for complete list of eligibility requirements.

Grants are also available for those non-profit organizations benefitting military members and their families.

All application materials must be post-marked no later than March 1, 2013 for consideration.

For more information and to download the scholarship or grant application form visit the OSC website at www.osc29palms.com or email Laura Scotto at osc2ndvice@gmail.com.

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

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See answers on page A6

I'M TIRED!

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ACROSS

1. Wade through mud
5. El ___ (weather phenomenon)
9. Comedian Rock
14. Ballerina's garb
15. Words of confidence
16. Half of Hispaniola
17. "Topaz" author Leon
18. Once-common electronics shop gadget
20. "Iliad" sage
22. Musical talent
23. Like a broken bronc
24. Qatari, e.g.
26. Partner of red beans
28. Rarely seen brass instrument
33. Prefix with center
34. Bit of foliage
35. Casaba or Crenshaw
38. Business abbr. followed by a year
40. Winter neckwear
43. In ___ straits
44. Port on the Seine
46. Narc's incursion
48. Front end of a bray
49. Cause to get inebriated
53. Canyon comeback
54. Pack away
55. When doubled, a penitentiary
58. MS. reviewers
60. Puts up
64. Neither sink nor swim
67. Cheer for your team
68. Get melodramatic
69. Sticky strip
70. Where Paris took Helen
71. "What's My Line?" crew
72. "Zounds!"
73. One of the Ivies

DOWN

1. Phaser setting
2. Tackle box item
3. Mayberry tippler
4. Composer Mahler
5. Fertilizer compounds
6. Post-OR place
7. Local theater, slangly
8. Slot machine attribute
9. Fidel's associate
10. Sped up
11. Actress Moreno
12. Bit of news
13. Farm father
19. Chicago paper, familiarly
21. Sportscaster Hershiser
25. Bric-a-___
27. Dot follower
28. Zig or zag
29. Lhasa ___ (small dog)
30. Grinned from ear to ear
31. "It's a work ___!"
32. Statesman Root
36. Creme-filled snack
37. ___-do-well
39. Convention attendee
41. Cheerleaders' syllables
42. Rid of impurities
45. Big Apple inits.
47. Christian in fashion
50. "That was close!"
51. Compound of element #53
52. Of a standard keyboard layout
55. Choreography bit
56. "___ La Douce"
57. Marquee gas
59. Dateless
61. Mrs. Dithers
62. Hammer or sickle
63. Lid malady
65. Costa ___ Sol
66. Emissions-watching org.

OBSERVATION POST

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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 Twentynine Palms:
 - Adobe Smoke Shop, 6441 Adobe Rd.
 - STC Smoke Shop, 6001 Adobe Rd.
 - K Smoke Shop, 5865A Adobe Rd.

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

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

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.29palms.marines.mil>



Matt Altman

Lancaster, Calif. — Firefighter, CCFD, 25

- > **I was a fire explorer** for five years, from 13 to 18. It's a branch of the Boy Scouts of America. It basically shows you what it's like to be a firefighter. Honestly, my older sister was doing it and I didn't have anything to do on Thursdays so I did that.
- > **Originally, I was getting** stuff lined up to go to Annapolis or West Point to go into the military and be a pilot.
- > **Top Gun.** When I was young I watched that movie and I thought it was the greatest thing ever.
- > **It's been a while** since I've watched it actually. Since I turned from it I haven't watched it. It's kind of like I turned my back on it and I'd feel shameful if I watch it.
- > **I did my first ride-along,** ran my first call and I was hooked. I was 14 maybe.

It was exhilarating, just a pure adrenaline rush. It's amazing how life happens. I was like, "I like the fireman thing better. It's a lot more fun."

> **I went home** after that and told my mom I wanted to be a fireman and she looked at me like she wanted to strangle me a bit.

> **I've thought about** [being a pilot]. I've wondered where my life would be and how much would be different. I know I wouldn't have met my wife or have a son right now, but would I go back and change it? No.

> **When I actually do** get to fight fire, that's when I'm fulfilled. I don't know what it is about doing it, but it's a sense of accomplishment.

> **Full gear, I think** it's probably 40 to 50 pounds. It's second nature to me. I've got so many tools in my pockets it adds an extra five to 10 pounds. I'm basically like a walking tool box.

> **What's cool is** that my wife's grandfather is a retired fire captain from this department. He lives through me. He tells me old stories and I tell him new stories. Whenever we get a fire he's all about it, he still loves it.

> **There was one time** a little boy who was nine years old, Noah, got hit on Adobe Road. I stopped, nobody else was there. He ended up going to the same church my mom goes to and they sent me a picture and said "Thank you."

> **I try to keep myself** emotionally disconnected from things like that. Everyone has their own coping mechanisms here. It can desensitize you to a lot of things.

> **I grew up** around here in the city of Twentynine.

> **Getting a full-time job** is the hardest part. I got lucky with the Department of Defense and becoming a DOD firefighter.

> **I just bought a house;** I've got a five-year-old son, Christian, who takes up a lot of my time.

> **I've been married** since October but we've been together since we had Christian.

> **We did a courthouse** thing and we're gonna get married at Disneyland in March. She's a big Disney kind of person.

> **We have season passes** [to Disney]. I think last year we went 15 times. It's freaking awesome.

> **We're kind of like people watchers,** just an overall experience of people there. We'll sit down on the curb waiting for the fireworks and see the mix of what's going on like the angry dad or the happy family. It's cool to watch.

> **I am content.** I am very happy with what I do. I get to go out and fight fire, I get paid to go work out. Like I said, I'm not getting beat up all of the time so I'm well-rested for my son. God, it takes a lot out of you.

Interviewed by Cpl. William J. Jackson, January 22, 2013



RCT-7 Marine shoulders heavy responsibilities

Cpl. Anthony Ward Jr.
Regional Command Southwest

AFGHANISTAN — One of the easiest ways to supply Marines in combat with essential gear and equipment are vehicle convoys. These logistics trains can carry more supplies than a helicopter and reach areas that may not be feasible to reach by air.

The responsibility of orchestrating these multiple vehicle trips usually doesn't fall upon the shoulders of a junior non-commissioned officer.

Cpl. Stephen Karavolos is one of the exceptions, serving as an asset to the Georgian Liaison Team for Regimental Combat Team 7, Regional Command Southwest.

Karavolos, a motor transport operator by trade, enlisted into the Marine Corps during September 2009, after an unfortunate injury opened the door for him.

"I wrestled for Longwood High School in New York," said Karavolos, 22. "I injured my neck, so I wasn't able to go to college. I had a scholarship to go to Penn State. I decided to take my next step and join the Marine Corps. I wanted to serve my country honorably."

Karavolos served in Afghanistan for his first time with Combat Logistics Battalion 8.

"On my first deployment, I was a MK-19 gunner and a vehicle commander," Karavolos said. "That's pretty much all I did."

Karavolos was in Afghanistan from January to August 2012. He volunteered to return and was sent back as a part of the GLT during September 2012.

A seasoned veteran, Karavolos has a much

As a convoy commander, you're responsible for the entire convoy. Every person, every action the Marines do and get the mission done.

— Cpl. Stephen Karavolos

higher workload than his previous deployment and is expected to conduct work above his pay grade.

"This time around I'm the convoy commander," Karavolos said. "I'm the motor transport chief, as well as the operations chief."

A convoy commander is usually a billet held by a

junior officer. The motor transport chief and operations chief billets are usually held by staff non-commissioned officers, usually a staff sergeant or gunnery sergeant. Karavolos holds all these billets and the responsibility that comes with them.

"As a convoy commander, you're responsible for the entire convoy," Karavolos said. "Every person, every action the Marines do and getting the mission done. As a motor (transport) chief, all the operators and personnel have to be accounted for. As the operations chief, I have to be accountable for all the convoys, patrols and operations that are going on."

Karavolos has to keep track of nearly 47 Marines, 150 pieces of gear and provide logistical support for the Georgian battalions and the bases they have nearby.

His efforts and dedication to mission accomplishment have impressed his leadership.

"For him to step up as a junior NCO says a lot," said 2nd Lt. Robert E. Dzvonic, supply officer for the GLT. "He oversees everything, and he is in charge of the logistics train that keeps things going."

As his deployment draws closer to an end, Karavolos will continue to serve honorably and provide his unit with the support they need.

GATEWAY TO AFGHANISTAN

Mechanized Assault Course

ITX



AIR FORCE STAFF SGT. STEPHANY RICHARDS

“THE BIG PIECE IN OUR PREDEPLOYMENT TRAINING IS WE GIVE THEM THE WORST CASE SCENARIO HERE, AS FAR AS TASKING THEM AS MUCH AS POSSIBLE,”

—LT. COL. JASON PRATT

3/4 takes part in first ITX

Cpl. Ali Azimi
Combat Correspondent

Marines with 3rd Battalion, 4th Marine Regiment, conducted the Mechanized Assault Course as part of the Combat Center's first Integrated Training Exercise Jan. 22 at Range 210.

The battalion is approximately half-way through the 29-day ITX training preparing them to deploy to Afghanistan in support of Operation Enduring Freedom.

“The big thing the Mechanized Assault Course gives them is it makes them put together all the individual functions the company or battalion does,” said Lt. Col. Jason Pratt, head of tactical air-control evaluation, Tactical Training Exercise Control Group. “Not only is it squads doing squad tactics and platoons doing platoon tactics, you have to integrate it all.”

The MAC is a two-day company-sized exercise that integrates the different assets available to the unit when engaging the enemy. The course involves a day of offensive attacks followed by a day of defensive measures.

The unit had tactically entered the Military Operations on Urban Terrain town at the range the previous day and pushed the enemy forces toward the south. They then had 12 hours to set up defensive positions and repel the adversary.

“I like ITX a lot better than EMV,” said Lance Cpl. Philip Dimalanta, rifleman, 3/4.

“It just keeps you in the mindset of continuous operations. It's more like the real thing.”

The Marines were lined up against a berm on the south side of the town. They had dug into the ground and set up strategic machine-gun positions. The infantrymen were faced with a new challenge however, utilizing the weapons and logistics of other battalions around them.

Marines with 1st Tank Battalion, 3rd Assault Amphibian Battalion and 3rd Light Armored Reconnaissance Battalion were attached to them, lining their defensive position with their unit's armored vehicles.

The Marines held a defensive position through the night until the enemy's first attack at 8 the next morning. As the day progressed, they continued to hold their defensive positions.

The infantrymen successfully integrated the light armored vehicles, M1A1 Abrams Tanks and assault amphibious vehicles as well as multiple air support components for attack and evacuation of simulated casualties.

“The big piece in our pre-deployment training is we give them the worst case scenario here, as far as tasking them as much as possible,” Pratt said. “Hopefully, when this goes down in theater, they are not doing all the tasks; They are just doing some of the tasks and they have the confidence to handle whatever they need to.”

The unit's next stage in ITX will be a battalion-sized live-fire final exercise.



CPL. ALI AZIMI

[Above] An M1A1 Abrams tank provides suppressive fire against simulated insurgents during day 12 of the Integrated Training Exercise, Jan 22.

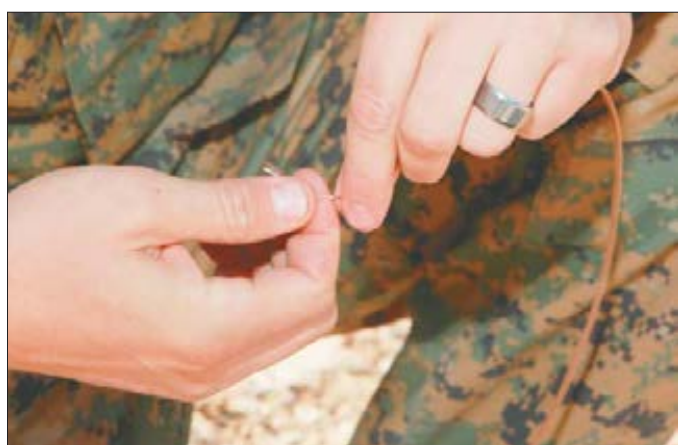
[Top] Marines with 3rd Battalion, 4th Marine Regiment, hold a defensive position during the Mechanized Assault Course portion of the Integrated Training Exercise at Range 210, Jan 22.

SMUD, from A1

our arsenal.”

The students assembled their devices during their designated 30 minute time frame. The students’ years in the EOD field made wiring the device seem like just a review, rather than a test.

“Congrats, gents, we passed,” announced one of the Marines once all of the charges successfully went off.



CPL. WILLIAM J JACKSON

Staff Sgt. Greg Newman, student, EOD supervisor’s course, wires a Marine Air Systems Remote Firing Device, an electronic device that allows EOD technicians the ability to control a blast down to the second, at the Combat Center’s Range 112 Jan. 18.

CAMPAIGN, from A1

likely to appeal to someone and create more donors,” Hall said.

The Combat Center surpassed any previous milestones during the campaign; it was more about effective contact and informative information, Hall added. More than 65 percent of the \$500,000 goal was met.

“Unit representatives were trained how to explain the CFC and what the campaign entailed,” Hall said. The biggest obstacle was explaining how much of an impact \$2 a month could have on an organization and how servicemembers can assist, she added.

“Although we didn’t raise \$500,000, we were successful at increasing the overall effective contact in this year’s campaign,” Hall said.

Awards will be presented today at 10 a.m. at the flag pole to recognize key CFC contributors and participants and to award 23rd Dental Company with the Commanding General’s Unit Award recognition, for achieving a 91% participation rate and averaging \$162.62 donated per person.

According to Petty officer 2nd Class Esra Colvard, hospital corpsman, 23rd Dental Co, and the CFC representative, her strategy was to bring awareness to the Marines, sailors and staff.

“I’ve been [a CFC representative] for two years now,” Colvard said. “We did better than last year, a lot better and I feel good about it.”

Relax with the paper

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with the Hi-Desert Star**

**Thursdays with
The Desert Trail**

**Fridays with
The Observation Post**



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Surprise

Safety

Stand

Down

Battalion combines PT, PME

Story and photos by
Cpl. Ali Azimi

Marines with Combat Logistics Battalion 7 left their headquarters building on the morning of Jan. 16 for a battalion run around the Combat Center.

The Marines expected nothing out of the ordinary. They would yell cadences for motivation and finish together a few miles down the road, but they were taken by surprise as they approached 14th Street, where a car was turned over on the side of the road and three Marines were laying in the dirt.

Fortunately, it was not a real accident. The scenario was set up by CLB-7's command in coordination with the Combat Center's Fire Department and the San Bernardino Sheriff's Department as a way to teach a lesson to the Marines about the importance of safe and sober driving. It was a break from the usual briefings and gave the Marines a look at what they believed to be a real accident.

"We decided to give a real strong attention gain-er to get our message across about safety and our conduct on the road during regular working hours and off-duty hours," said Master Sgt. Devron Gray, operations chief, CLB-7. "Awareness is the key. When you are aware of something it pushes your thought process to think about what you're doing before you do it. It's differently a huge factor."

The scenario started out like a normal run, with the exception of a few fire trucks and police cars using their sirens and lights as they passed the Marines on their run. But as the run progressed down Gillespie Road, it became more apparent there was something wrong further ahead.

The scene of the accident was surrounded emergency vehicles and car debris scattered on the road. A humvee stood upright with its front bumper

attached to the side of an upside down car. The trashed vehicle had three Marines covered in fake blood laying halfway out the windows, simulating the casualties.

"The scenario was an accident between a tactical vehicle and [privately owned vehicle]," Gray said. "There was one deceased person and two were critically injured."

The fire and sheriff's department treated the scene as a real scenario, as CLB-7 Marines approached the area. They provided medical attention to the injured, carried all three away on stretchers, inspected the car and the area, then began ripping the car apart using the Jaws of Life, everything that would occur had the accident been real.

CLB-7 Marines stood circled around the crash site speechless. As they got a closer look, they recognized the three casualties as members of their battalion and were close enough to see the blood was fake.

Once the spell was broken, unit commanders stepped out from behind the humvee and circled the Marines around them to explain the situation and the purpose.

The desert is a dangerous place to drive and Highway 62 has many accidents, often similar to the scenario set up for CLB-7 Marines, according to Deputy Curtis Kolb, San Bernardino Sheriff's Department. Many avoidable incidences, such as falling asleep at the wheel or speeding, have claimed the lives of Marines.

"You guys are in a dangerous job," Kolb said, addressing the Marines. "When you're deployed your family knows they might that phone call that something has happened to you. What you do is honorable. So when we have to make death notification that their loved ones have been killed in a car accident like this, it's an unbelievable tragedy."



[Top] Marines with Combat Logistics Battalion 7 run in formation down Gillespie Road during a battalion run Jan. 16 encountering a surprise safety standown.

[Middle] Marines surround the site of a simulated crash, set up by the unit as a way to teach the Marines about the importance of safe driving.

[Above] Combat Center firefighters treat the simulated crash site as they would a real crash, going through all the appropriate steps to analyze the wreckage and help any casualties inside. Combat Center Fire was on hand, helping the battalion illustrate the dangers of unsafe driving.

[Left] Combat Center firefighters rip apart a car from a simulated crash to show CLB-7 Marines the process of rescuing victims trapped in their vehicles.



Combat Center Clubs

Excursions Enlisted Club

Monday: Margarita Mondays
 Thursday: Rockin' Karaoke 7-10 p.m.
 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.

Bloodstripes NCO Club

Monday: Margarita Mondays
 Thursday: Warrior Night 4:30 - 9 p.m.
 Friday: Karaoke Night 6 - 9 p.m.

Hashmarks 29 SNCO Club

Friday: Steak Night, 4:30 - 8 p.m.
 Monday-Friday: All-hands lunch from 11 a.m. - 1:30 p.m.
 Monday: All-hands steak night, 4:30 - 8 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

Free Line Dance Lessons

Learn to dance the night away
 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.

DEATHTRAP

When: Now - Feb. 9
 Where: Theatre 29
 73637 Sullivan Rd., Twentynine Palms, Calif.
 For more information call 316-4151
 or visit <http://www.theatre29.org>

Lower Desert

Clint Black

Famous Country singer performs
 When: 8 p.m., Friday, Jan. 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>.

Lea Salonga

Critically acclaimed singer performs
 When: 9 p.m., Friday, Jan. 25
 Where: Agua Caliente Casino Resort Spa
 32-250 Bob Hope Dr., Rancho Mirage
 For more information call 888-999-1995 or visit
<http://hotwatercasino.com>.

Earth Wind & Fire

Classic 70's band performs
 When: 8 p.m., Saturday, Feb. 2
 Where: Fantasy Springs Resort Casino
 84-245 Indio Springs Parkway, Indio
 For more information call 800-827-2946 or visit
<http://www.fantasyspringsresort.com>.

Boyz II Men

R&B / urban soul group performs
 When: 9:00 p.m., Friday, Feb. 15
 Where: Morongo Casino Resort and Spa
 49500 Seminole Drive, Cabazon, Calif.
 For more information call 800-252-4499 or visit
<http://www.morongocasinosort.com>.

Masterful depiction of hunt for bin Laden leaves much for viewers to decide

NEIL POND

"Zero Dark Thirty"

Starring: Jessica Chastain & Joel Eggerton
 Directed by Katherine Bigelow
 Rated R, 157 min.

This gripping Oscar-nominated drama about America's decade-long manhunt for Osama bin Laden was making sparks fly even before it hit the screen.

Focusing on the single-minded efforts of a determined young CIA operative named Maya (Jessica Chastain) to find the terrorist leader responsible for the attacks of 9/11, the film delves into the protracted, expensive, super-secretive, and sometimes brutally ugly pursuit of the man who for ten years topped America's most-wanted list.

Even before it was officially released, some politicians and CIA insiders were worked into a lather about how director Katherine Bigelow and writer Mark Boal (who previously collaborated, with tremendous results, on "The Hurt Locker") must have had unauthorized access to classified information to make it, how the movie would surely get the details wrong, or how its stripes would certainly wave too far to the left or too far to the right.

But the results, in fact, are decidedly non-partisan, grittily realistic and masterfully made, and the filmmakers have defended their sources as legitimate. Any creative license they may have taken are difficult, if not impossible, to compare with the factual record, the official details of which will likely remain in governmental and military shadows. And they've

delivered one awesomely effective wallop of a movie.

As Maya, a character known only by her first name but based on a real-life CIA counter-terrorism agent, Chastain is outstanding. She's been nominated alongside the picture for a Best Actress Oscar, and she just brought home a Golden Globe.

Bigelow, using locations in production-friendly India to fill in for Pakistan and Afghanistan, creates a painstakingly detailed narrative that's riveting in its sense of reality. One terrorist bombing, in particular, takes the audience by as much of a surprise as its victims, jolting viewers in their seats.

The movie doesn't flinch from its depiction of the "enhanced interrogation techniques" deployed at the CIA-operated detainee sites. The opening scenes, in which an Iraqi terrorist suspect is bound, beaten, waterboarded, shackled into a dog collar, led by a leash and finally folded into an isolation box, are wrenchingly difficult to watch.

That same suspect later gives up a piece of information that begins Maya's long, winding, frustrating but ultimately successful path to bin Laden. Is the movie excusing, or exposing, the use of torture in fighting terrorism? That's just one of many things it leaves for viewers to decide.

When does the risk of doing something outweigh the risk not doing anything? What are the costs of revenge, and the personal expense of answering a higher call? Where will the "war on terror" take us next, geographically, emotionally and ideologically?

The film's final half hour, a meticulously orchestrated recreation of the nighttime raid on bin Laden's compound, seems harrowingly authentic, as we ride alongside with the SEALs in their Black Hawk helicopters, pop out onto the rooftop, burst into the hallways and head up the stairs to the "jackpot"—along for every step of the way, seeing much of it as they surely did, through the otherworldly green glow of their night-vision goggles.

We know how this story ended. But watching it methodically unfold from the perspective of a behind-the-scenes player you never knew existed might open you up to some intriguing new strands of America's new-world-order DNA--and Maya's empty silence, in the final scene, should be the starting point, rather than the conclusion, for even more to think about after the credits roll on this powerful, potent, important movie.

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