



With 2014 upon us, the Combat Center will gear up for another long year of dedication and service to our country and our Corps. This past year has been an eventful one as senior leaders changed command, Marines deployed to Afghanistan in support of Operation Enduring Freedom, and various units endured the premier combat training aboard the Combat Center's vast ranges. The mission of the Combat Center remains the same, but its capabilities are always expanding. With the experience and knowledge gained during 2013, Combat Center Marines will be ready for whatever endeavors and opportunities the new year brings.

A LOOK BACK at 2013

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A YEAR IN SUPPORT OF OPERATION ENDURING FREEDOM

**2ND BATTALION, 7TH MARINE REGIMENT**
Aug. 7, 2012 - April 10, 2013

**REGIMENTAL COMBAT TEAM 7**
Oct. 9, 2012 - Aug. 24, 2013

**UNMANNED AERIAL VEHICLE SQUADRON 3**
Oct. 10, 2012 - May 19, 2013

**1ST TANK BATTALION**
Jan. 1, 2013 - July 28, 2013

**3RD BATTALION, 4TH MARINES, 7TH MARINE REGIMENT**
March 12, 2013 - Oct. 11, 2013

**3RD COMBAT ENGINEER BATTALION**
March 28, 2013 - Oct. 25, 2013

**UNMANNED AERIAL VEHICLE SQUADRON 1**
April 27, 2013 - Nov. 22, 2013

**3RD BATTALION, 7TH MARINE REGIMENT**
Sept. 14, 2013 - Currently Deployed

CHANGES in the CORPS

Written by **Lance Cpl. Alejandro Bedoya**

The Marine Corps has greatly changed since its birth in 1775. This past year has further contributed to its evolution. Leaders toured bases across the Corps, addressing Marines on leadership, female Marines faced the challenges of new physical fitness standards and were afforded new Military Occupational Specialty opportunities. Combat readiness was revolutionized with the implementation of the Integrated Training Exercise aboard the Combat Center. Every year, the Corps reflects upon its successes and areas of opportunity in order to maintain its status as America’s elite fighting force. In 2013, the Corps attained many historic milestones. Not only have our standards improved but new avenues have been created for every Marine to pursue.

DUTY POLICIES

A new duty policy was implemented by the Commandant of the Marine Corps in 2013. Some of the changes include a roaming fire watch, and armed staff NCOs and officers on duty at each barracks. The new policy has already taken effect in some bases throughout the Corps.

THE REAWAKENING

The Commandant of the Marine Corps’ reawakening campaign took place this past year. Marine Corps leadership toured bases addressing non-commissioned officers to encourage leadership by example, enhancing troop welfare and abiding by Marine Corps values.

INFANTRY TRAINING DEVELOPMENT

For the first time in history, female Marines were able to volunteer to attend the infantry training course. Female enlisted Marines were afforded the opportunity to participate in the Infantry Training Battalion. Female commissioned officers were also given the opportunity to test their grit in the Infantry Officers’ Course.

UNIFORM CHANGES

Marine Corps leadership made the decision to make the male barracks cover universal. The universal cover promotes uniformity across the Marine Corps and is now an option for female Marines to wear either barracks covers.

8th and I SGT. MAJ.

Sgt. Maj. Angela Maness assumed duties as the senior enlisted Marine at Marine Barracks Washington. Maness replaced Sgt. Maj. Eric J. Stockton and made history by being the first female sergeant major at 8th and I. Maness assumed the duties on June 27.

FEMALE PFT STANDARDS

Female Marines were given the option to do pull-ups instead of the flexed-arm hang during their physical fitness test. The option was given to the female Marines to prepared them for the new upcoming standard. The standard was originally set to be enforced in 2014 but was pushed back until 2016.

START OF ITX

The Marine Corps launched the first Integrated Training Exercise as its premier, pre-deployment training package, Jan. 11. More than 15 units, Marine Corps wide, have conducted ITX, the successor to Enhanced Mojave Viper, aboard the Combat Center this year. The training incorporates a building block approach, beginning at a platoon level and increasing to a battalion-sized element, where Marines may utilize combined-arms tactics to employ counter measures, or initiate an attack on simulated enemy targets.

BIRTH ANNOUNCEMENTS

ISAAC DAVID MCKEOWN
Born on: Jan.1 , 2014
Born to: Todd and Casey McKeown

KAYLEE MAE BLEVINS
Born on: Dec. 29, 2013
Born to: Beck and Andria Blevins

REAGAN ANN VANNY
Born on: Dec. 27, 2013
Born to: Alex and Rebecca Vanny

KAMI LYNN KOEPNICK
Born on: Dec. 23, 2013
Born to: Darren and Shannon Koepnick

ABRAM JOSEPH MARAFFI
Born on: Dec. 21, 2013
Born to: Jason and Sara Maraffi
DAMIEN RICO DELAROSA II
Born on: Dec. 5, 2013
Born to: Damien and Karina Delarosa

CHRISTOPHER JAMES PHILLIPS
Born on: Dec. 21, 2013
Born to: Christopher and Meagan Phillips

HUNTER RAY CAMBELL
Born on: Dec. 20, 2013
Born to: Kyle and Jennifer Cambell

HUNTER ROBERT HANNERS
Born on: Dec. 19, 2013
Born to: Bart and Savannah Hanners

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Let us know what you think of the Observation Post and what you’d like to see more of with a quick survey at:

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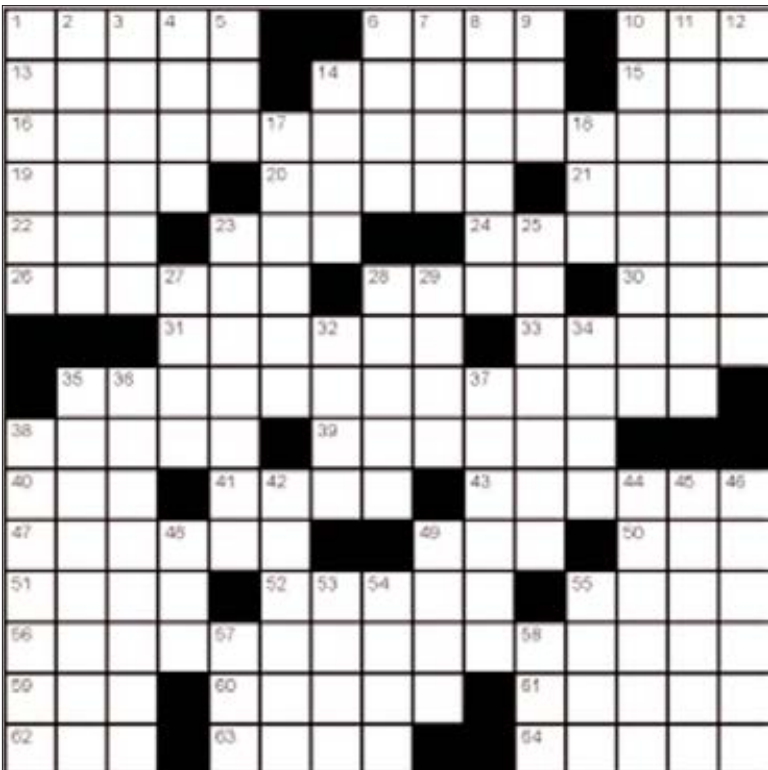
The Combat Center has its own YouTube channel. Find it at <http://www.youtube.com/user/CombatCenterPAO>



The Combat Center has its own Flickr photo and video streams. Find them at <http://www.flickr.com/thecombatcenter>

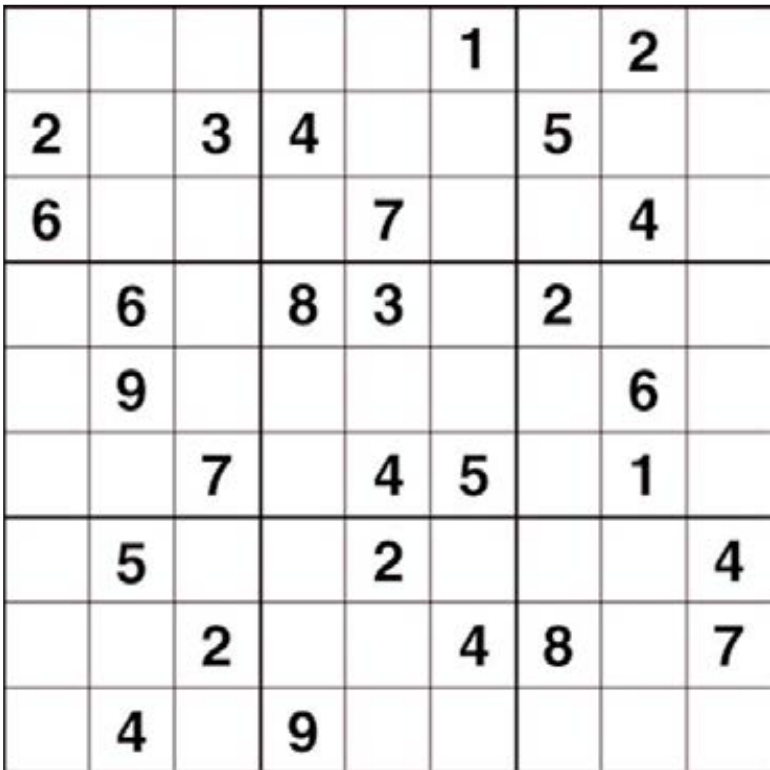
HOWEVER OFTEN

- Across
- 1 Crook's other name
- 6 Therefore
- 10 Half a dance
- 13 Tropical fruit
- 14 Keaton of "Annie Hall"
- 15 Concert ticket information
- 16 Type of opportunity
- 19 These may clash
- 20 Last Greek letter
- 21 Iowa State University's town
- 22 Place to sleep
- 23 Ted Turner network
- 24 One of the colors of the rainbow
- 26 Franklin of R&B
- 28 Skin feature
- 30 1960s-70s war locale, for short
- 31 Hits that clear the bases
- 33 Public humiliation
- 35 Old yarn
- 38 Belgian treaty city
- 39 Loves to death
- 40 ___ Vegas, Nevada
- 41 "___ Well That Ends Well"
- 43 Horrified
- 47 Canada's capital
- 49 Oinking beast
- 50 Doubting Thomas's comment
- 51 Got 100 on, as a
- test
- 52 Unflavored
- 55 "Cup or ___?" (ice cream parlor question)
- 56 Commodores hit ballad
- 59 Sushi fish
- 60 Dog's name, in cartoons
- 61 Less covered
- 62 In need of rain
- 63 Summit
- 64 Tennis star Agassi
- Down
- 1 One-celled organism
- 2 German golfer Bernhard
- 3 Hard to decipher, as a message
- 4 Gets on in years
- 5 "___ Married an Axe Murderer" (Mike Myers film)
- 6 Kitchen floor piece
- 7 Former Defense Secretary
- 8 Lopsided, as an advantage
- 9 Spot
- 10 Thief or arsonist, for example
- 11 Fan's favorite event
- 12 "Cool!"
- 14 "___ Yankees"
- 17 Lacking fame



- 18 Small dollop
- 23 Southern tribe
- 25 Golden years fund
- 27 Slender
- 28 Spurs to action
- 29 Norway's capital
- 32 End-of-list abbr.
- 34 Chopped meal
- 35 Former British
- Prime Minister Margaret
- 36 Like some winds or lime
- 37 Empties the tub
- 38 Was a bad winner
- 42 Mobile computer
- 44 On the train
- 45 Workshop tool
- 46 "___ here!" ("Poltergeist"
- catchphrase)
- 48 Ending for lemon or lime
- 49 Dock
- 53 Not taped
- 54 Visa rival, for short
- 55 Family
- 57 Historian's time
- 58 Lawyer's gp.

SUDOKU 3144D





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

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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.

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.

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In Twentynine Palms:
- Adobe Smoke Shop, 6441 Adobe Rd.
- STC Smoke Shop, 6001 Adobe Rd.
- K Smoke Shop, 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.
- Whispering Palms Apts., 449 E. Arenas Road
- NYPD Pizza, 260-262 N. Palm Canyon Drive

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

WHAT I'VE LEARNED

THE BEST OF

2013

PAUL KELLEY

I'm sappy when it comes to traditions. One of the reasons I like the Marine Corps so much is because of the traditions. With the Ford Mustang I think there's a lot of that American pride and that tradition and history behind it.



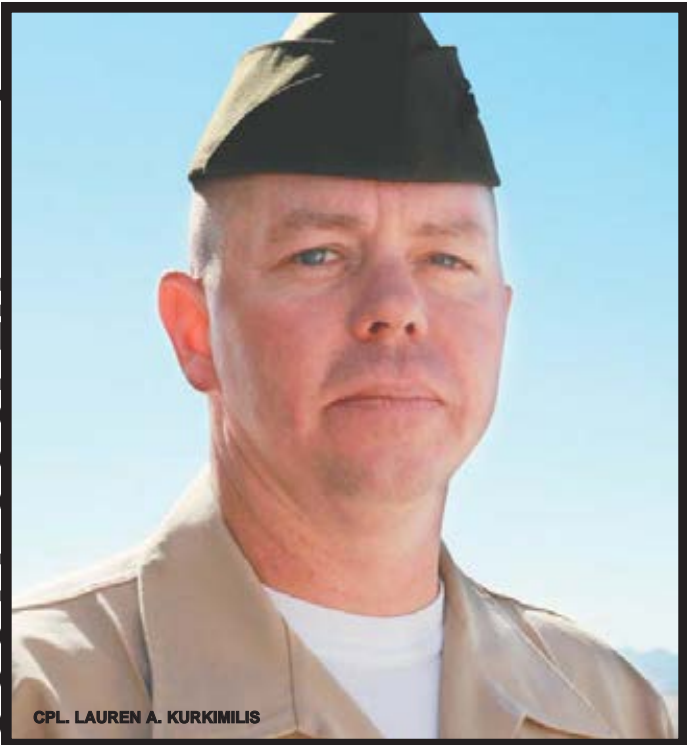
MICHAEL BAKER

I saw a funny sign that made me laugh because it said, "Keep running, there's a zombie behind you." I had a lot of fun that day. This triathlon was huge, not like my first one. When I finally finished, I heard the announcement say 'Congratulations Michael Baker, you are now a triathlete.'

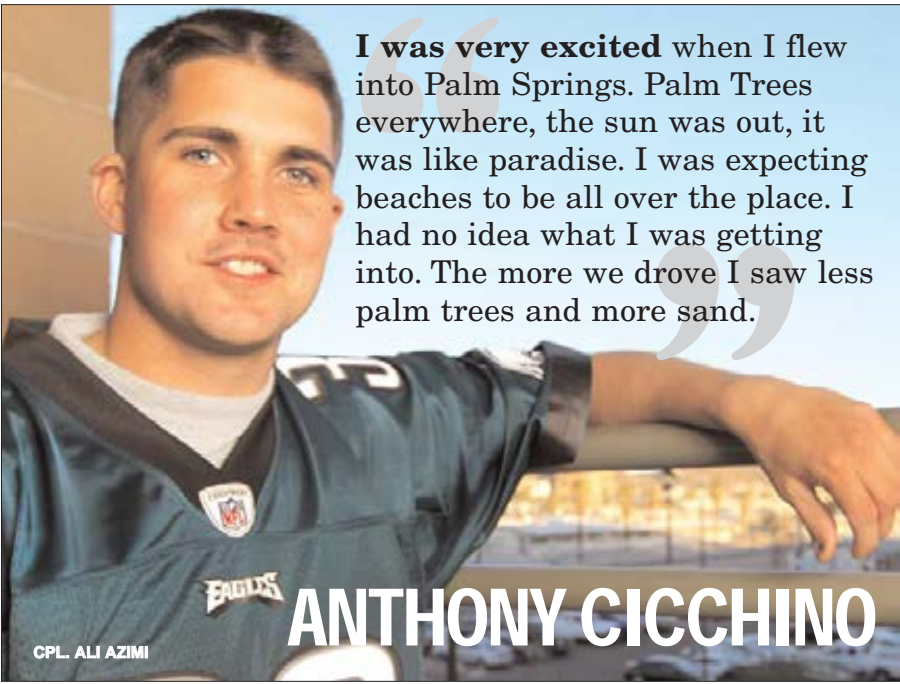


When I think back, it's kind of funny. There was this kid in high school named Chris, and he'd always have the high-and-tight and the red poolee jacket and we thought, "Dude, what a dork." So, I never thought I'd be in the military. The Marine Corps gave me an opportunity to grow up and be a part of something.

SCOTT COOPER



I was very excited when I flew into Palm Springs. Palm Trees everywhere, the sun was out, it was like paradise. I was expecting beaches to be all over the place. I had no idea what I was getting into. The more we drove I saw less palm trees and more sand.



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



ON THE

RANGES

As the Marine Corps’ premier training facility, the Combat Center, provides a realistic training environment for units throughout the Marine Corps. Its mountainous terrain and drastic temperature changes give units a snapshot of environments found in the Middle East and other areas around the world. The size, facilities, and services offered at the Combat Center’s training areas allow units to conduct combined-arms training, urban operations and evaluation of tactics to promote readiness of operational forces. The Combat Center’s vast training area allow Marines to conduct exercises that will sharpen their skills. These include artillery shoots, platoon-sized operations, simulated air assaults, convoy operations, and bilateral training alongside units from various nations. The Combat Center is the only base of its kind in the Marine Corps and will continue to provide Marines with the necessary assets to keep the Corps a step ahead the rest.



LANCE CPL. CHARLES J. SANTAMARIA



CPL. ALI AZIMI



CPL. ALI AZIMI

[Top] Cpl. Colby Troyer, squad leader, 3rd Battalion, 5th Marine Regiment, gives directions to his squad during the Mechanized Assault Course at Range 210, Nov. 3. **[Center]** A coyote with the Combat Center’s Tactical Training Exercise Control Group, watches Marines with 1st Battalion, 9th Marines, 8th Marine Regiment, as they conduct a company-sized attack at Range 401, July 26. **[Left]** Marines with Battery N, 5th Battalion, 14th Marine Regiment, fire an M777 A2 Howitzer during a series of integrated firing exercises at the Combat Center’s Quakenbush Training Area, April 26.

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THREE		T	I	M
EEL		ROVER		BARER
DRY		APEX		ANDRE

FOREIGN FRIENDS



LACNE CPL. PAUL S. MARTINEZ



CPL. D. J. WU



LANCE CPL. PAUL S. MARTINEZ



LANCE CPL. PAUL S. MARTINEZ



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See page B2 for
Sunset Cinema
movie
schedule

PART OF THE COMMUNITY



LANCE CPL. KASEY PEACOCK

The Combat Center works diligently to support local events and organizations as an active proponent of the Morongo Basin. Throughout 2013, approximately 5,000 Combat Center Marines participated in more than 300 community events. The partnerships and relationships developed through these events provide the Combat Center with the ability to give back to the community, which supports the installation and the mission of its service members.

Throughout the year, the Combat Center coordinated various visits, community relations events, on and off base, including Adopt-a-School, job shadowing, Gifted and Talented Education site visits, Red Ribbon Week, Read Across America Week, Earth Day clean-ups, community partnerships with the local chambers and school district, television appearances, parades, static displays, guest speakers, K-9 demonstrations and color guards.



LANCE CPL. KASEY PEACOCK



LANCE CPL. PAUL S. MARTINEZ

[Bottom, Left] Sgt. John Howell, patient, Wounded Warrior Battalion, assembles a candy gingerbread house with Jonathon Pena, 4th grader at Onaga Elementary School, during a school visit in, Yucca Valley, Calif., Dec. 19. **[Above]** Marines with 1st Tank Battalion are thanked by students during a memorial ceremony at Palm Vista Elementary School, Sept. 11. **[Bottom, Center]** Sgt. Jason Syvrud, rifleman, 3rd Battalion, 4th Marines, 7th Marine Regiment, watches as a dump truck disposes of garbage gathered during a community clean-up effort in Wonder Valley, Calif., Dec. 14. **[Top, Left]** Marines, sailors and spouses from the Combat Center, Marine Corps Base Camp Pendleton and Marine Corps Air Station Miramar joined Professional Golfers' Association West club members for dinner at the PGA West clubhouse in La Quinta, Calif., Dec. 14. **[Top, Right]** Sgt. Derick Organo, machine gunner, 3rd Battalion, 4th Marine Regiment, 1st Marine Division, explains the firing procedures for the M240B machine gun to Marine Corps Junior Reserve Officers' Training Corps cadets from Desert Hot Springs High School, at the Indoor Simulated Marksmanship Trainer Dec. 18.



LANCE CPL. KASEY PEACOCK



LANCE CPL. KASEY PEACOCK



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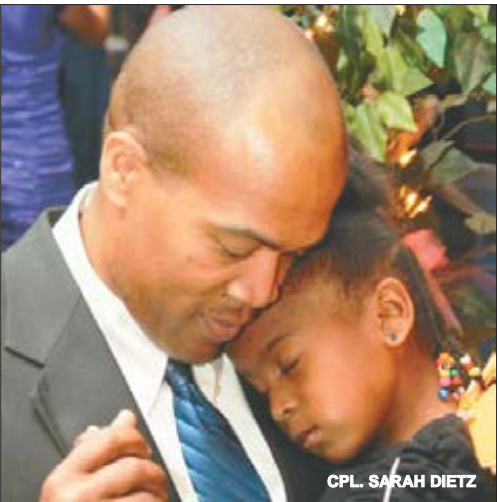


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[Top] Austin Kerrigan, 8 months, son of Capt. Will Kerrigan, company commander, Company E, 2nd Battalion, 7th Marine Regiment, sits with Santa Claus at the Marine Corps Exchange Dec. 6. **[Center, left]** Talon Savoie, 4 months, sits with his mother, Shelby, during the 3rd Combat Engineer Battalion Baby Shower, June 13. The unit held a battalion-wide baby shower for the 36 pregnant and recently pregnant spouses while the unit was deployed to Afghanistan. **[Center, right]** Gunnery Sgt. Cecil Melton dances with his 6-year-old daughter, Nijah, during the Combat Center's Father-Daughter Dance Feb. 8, at Building 1707. This is the first time Nijah went to a dance with her father. **[Bottom, left]** Michael Johnson, 2, son of Lance Cpl. Michael Johnson, rifleman, Company C, 1st Battalion, 7th Marine Regiment, plays in a bouncy-house at the battalion's Family Day held at the Desert Winds Golf Course March 22. **[Bottom, right]** 1st Lt. Josh Dewalt, weapons platoon commander, Company L, 3rd Battalion, 7th Marine Regiment, and his girlfriend, Meredith Shaver, share an embrace and kiss after he returns from deployment during a homecoming event at Del Valle field Dec. 19.



FAMILY

WHO WE FIGHT FOR

Behind the Marines and sailors who serve aboard the Combat Center are the families who support them. They are an integral part of the Combat Center community and play a significant role in the success of our mission. Families are celebrated at the Combat Center. They participate in unit events, are educated on the opportunities the base has to offer, and are invited to step into the boots of their Marines during functions such as Jane Wayne Day. The Combat Center makes it a point to ensure they are recognized and appreciated.





YearINPhotos

from around

THE CORPS



[Top, left] Lance Cpl. Nathan Chandler, machine gunner, 1st Battalion, 9th Marines, 8th Marine Regiment, hunkers down behind a compound wall during a firefight with insurgents near the Bari Gul Bazaar, Nad Ali District, Helmand province, Afghanistan, Dec. 4. **[Top, center]** Marine from Recruiting Station Lansing, Recruiting Sub-Stations Grand Rapids North and South, participate in the opening ceremony of the Grand Rapids Pond Hockey Classic, Jan. 25. **[Top, right]** Cpl. William Schuler, Black Sea Rotational Force 13, moves to his ambush position during a live-fire, ambush exercise in Balta Verde Training Area, Craiova, Romania, March 14. **[Center, right]** Recruits of Kilo Company, 3rd Recruit Training Battalion, Recruit Training Regiment, change positions above a small pond Nov. 7. **[Bottom, right]** Marines and sailors with Company F., 2nd Battalion, 2nd Marine Regiment, return home to their friends and family after a deployment to Afghanistan in support of Operation Enduring Freedom, Oct. 18. **[Bottom, center]** An AV-8B Harrier assigned to Marine Medium Tiltrotor Squadron 266, (Reinforced), descends onto the flight deck of the USS Kearsarge as an MV-22B Osprey prepares to take off, May 27. **[Bottom, left]** Aircraft Rescue and Firefighting Marines aboard Marine Corps Air Station New River, N.C., battle a fire during a life-fire training exercise, Jan. 17. **[Center, left]** A reconnaissance Marine with 2nd Reconnaissance Battalion, 2nd Marine Division, parachutes to the ground after a low-altitude static line jump.



As Marines, sportsmanship and physical activity are present in their everyday lives. This past year was filled with athletic rivalries, upsets and championships. Combat Center service members raced one another during a run for the Marine Corps' birthday, and competed against foreign and domestic military units during the Combat Center challenge. Marines thrive off competition and Marine Corps Community Services gave Marines aboard the Combat Center a chance to get out on the tracks and field and compete in something fun.



[Top, left] Joseph Gajewski, Mound Invaders' left fielder, takes a pitch from Chix and Stix during the first game of the co-ed softball league at Felix Field Sept. 18.
[Top, right] A Marine competes in the six-mile portion of the 8-4-6 race series at the Desert Winds Golf Course, Nov. 1.
[Top, center] John Vasques, Headquarters Battalion team, strikes the ball during the indoor soccer match at the East Gym Dec. 3.
[Bottom, left] Mike Lowe, goalie, Bruins ice hockey team, stops the puck during the Desert Ice Castle's Adult Hockey League Feb. 24.
[Bottom, center] A Marine watches after he drives the ball during a golf match at the Vintage Golf Club Feb. 15.



Combat Center Events

Winter Basketball League
Coaches meeting and registration deadline is January 8.
When: 5:30 p.m. - 9:30 p.m., begins Monday, Jan. 13
Where: East Gym and Fitness center
For more information contact Judy Moore at 830-4092

Science Night
Discover the wonderful world of science with tons of hands-on experiments and demonstrations. You can even take home your mad scientist creations.
When: 6 p.m. - 7:30 p.m., Thursday, Jan. 23.
Where: Lifelong Learning Library
For more information call 830-6875

SuperBowl XLVIII
Prizes and givaways throughout the game. Food and Drink Specials and Budweiser Girls
When: Feb. 2.
Where: Excursions, Blood Stripes, SNCO and Officers Club
For more information call 830-8429

Whooping Cough Vaccines available
This is a one-time booster for individuals over the age of seven. The boosters are available in the immunization clinic for children and adults on a walk-in basis.
When: 9 - 11:30 a.m. and 1 - 4 p.m., Mon. - Fri.
Where: Robert E. Bush Naval Hospital
For more events visit <http://www.mccs29palms.com>

Sunset Cinema

Friday, Jan. 10
8:30 p.m. – Homefront, R
11:30 p.m. – Out of the Furnace, R
Saturday, Jan. 11
10:30 a.m. – **Free Admission** Ice Age Continental Drift, PG
12:30 p.m. – Frozen 3-D, PG
3 p.m. – The Hunger Games: Catching Fire, PG-13
6:30 p.m. – Philomena, PG-13
8:30 p.m. – Dallas Buyers Club, R
11:30 p.m. – Out of the Furnace, R
Sunday, Jan. 12
12:30 p.m. – Tyler Perry’s: A Madea Christmas, PG-13
7:30 p.m. – The Hobbit: The Desolation of Smaug 3-D, PG-13
Monday, Jan. 13
6:30 p.m. – Out of the Furnace, R
Tuesday, Jan. 14
6 p.m. – The Hobbit: The Desolation of Smaug 3-D, PG-13
Wednesday, Jan. 15
6 p.m. – The Hunger Games: Catching Fire, PG-13
Thursday, Jan. 16
3 p.m. – Frozen 3-D, PG
5:30 p.m. – Ender’s Game, PG-13
8 p.m. – About Time, R

High Desert

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 (760) 363-3343.

The importance of being earnest
A trivial comedy for serious people
When: 7 p.m., Fridays & Saturdays, Jan. 10 - Feb. 8
Where: Theatre 29
73637 Sullivan Rd., Twentynine Palms, Calif.
For more information, call (760) 316-4151

Low Desert

Kathleen Madigan
American Comedy Award winner performs
When: 8 p.m., Saturday, Jan. 11
Where: Spotlight 29 Casino
46-200 Harrison Place, Coachella, Calif.
For more information, call 866-377-6829 or visit <http://www.spotlight29.com>

Snoop Dogg aka Snoop Lion
Multi-platinum artist performs
When: 8 p.m., Saturday, Jan. 11
Where: Fantasy Springs Resort Casino
84-245 Indio Springs Parkway, Indio, Calif.
For more information, call 800-827-2946 or visit <http://www.fantasyspringsresort.com>

Foreigner
British-American rock band performs
When: 9 p.m., Saturday, Feb. 1
Where: Morongo Casino Resort and Spa
49500 Seminole Drive, Cabazon, Calif.
For more information, call 800-252-4499 or visit <http://www.morongocasinoresort.com>

Air Supply
Australian soft rock duo perform
When: 8 p.m., Friday, Feb. 14
Where: Agua Caliente Casino, Resort and Spa
32-250 Bob Hope Dr., Rancho Mirage, Calif.
For more information, call 888-999-1995 or visit <http://hotwatercasino.com>

A sprawling, swirling period-piece parable of swinging ’70s greed



COURTESY PHOTO

“Some of this actually happened,” a placard playfully informs us at the beginning of “American Hustle,” director David O. Russell’s swirling, swinging tale of a pair of con artists in testy, zesty cahoots with an FBI agent to catch even bigger prey in the 1970s. It’s loosely based on the FBI’s real-life ABSCAM sting of the era, which ensnared several high-ranking politicians in a bribery and corruption investigation.

NEIL POND
“American Hustle”

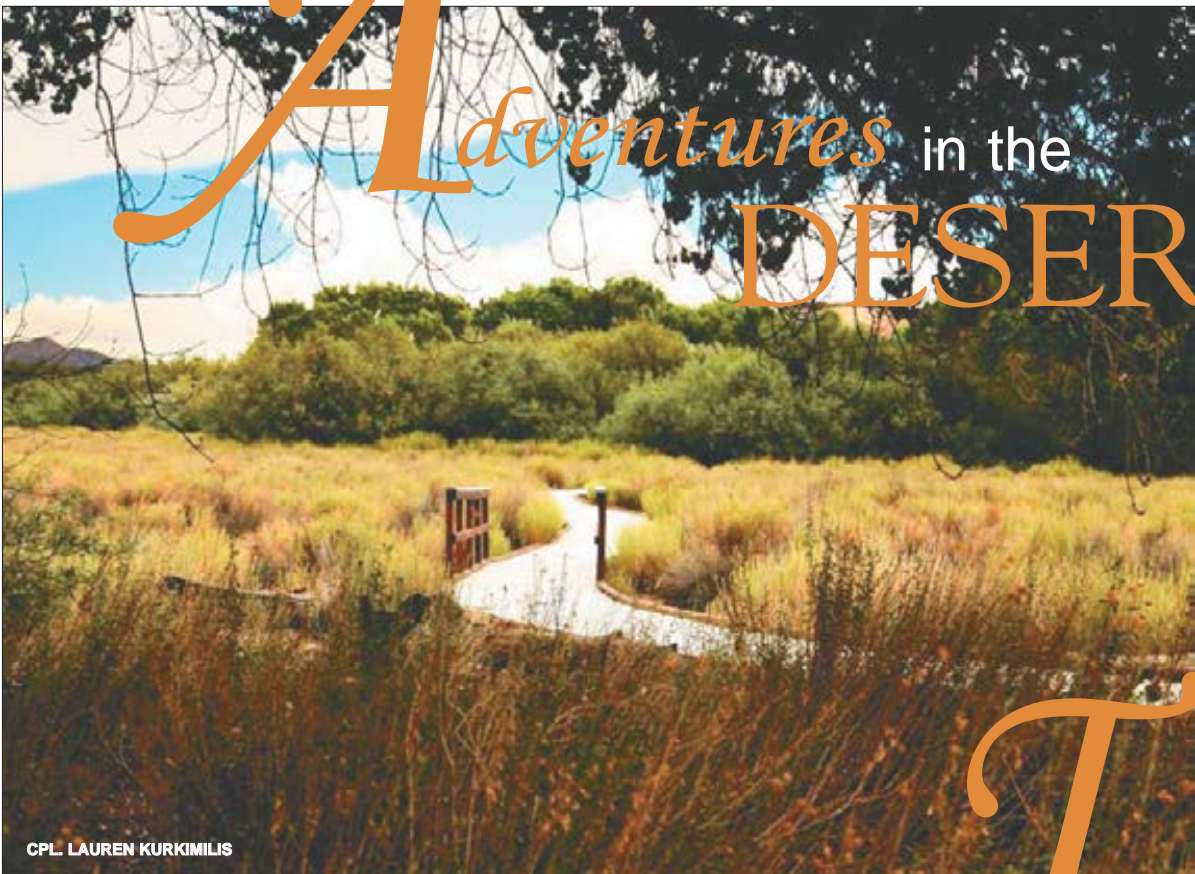
Starring Christian Bale, Amy Adams, Bradley Cooper & Jennifer Lawrence
Directed by David O. Russell
R, 138 min.

Christian Bale plays Irving Rosenfeld, a small-time Bronx con artist who’s made out pretty well in forged art and bogus loans. But his graft really kicks into high gear when he hooks up with Sidney (Amy Adams), a former stripper who sees a way to broaden their scams—and pave the way to a much bigger, richer life for them both. But hold on: Irving’s a married man, and his wife (Jennifer Lawrence) is a real suburban scrapper. Richie DiMaso (Bradley Cooper) is the hyper-adrenalized FBI agent eager to make his bones who brings down both Irving and Sidney, then uses them to make an even bigger sting, an elaborate affair that eventually includes a fake sheik (Michael Peña), a New Jersey mayor (Jeremy Renner), a slew of politicians and the mafia. The movie is a deep, delicious dish of late-’70s detail, from the music to the clothes to the hair—and oh, the hair! Bale’s character sports one of the most outrageous

comb-overs in the history of cinema, and agent DiMaso reveals that his teeny curls don’t come easy (or natural). Bale is always fascinating to watch as he burrows into a role, but Adams and Lawrence bring the heat that makes this story sizzle. And Russell (“Silver Linings Playbook,” “The Fighter”) juggles his ensemble of complicated, conflicted characters with an orchestral touch that often recalls the mastery of maestro Martin Scorsese—especially in a “Goodfellas”-esque casino scene with a gaggle of Las Vegas mobsters ... and a very special surprise cameo. It’s all hip, humorous, edgy and immensely entertaining, this sprawling period parable about a group of needy, greedy people who aren’t who they purport themselves to be—people with fake tans, fake nails, fake hair, fake lives, people who aren’t “real,” who are always conning somebody, everybody, each other, even themselves. As Irving says, there’s “a lot of grey” in the muddled middle ground between good and bad, right and wrong, between the forger and the artist, in a world where it seems that everyone’s on the make, on the take, on the hustle, on the scam. Especially when, as Lawrence’s character says, all you’ve been dealt in life are “poisonous choices.” When that happens, as Russell’s outstanding “American Hustle” suggests, all any of us might do is whatever it takes to survive.

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Throughout the year, the Observation Post staff challenged themselves to capture the beauty of the local area with photography. They traveled near and far across the **Morongo Basin**, photographing the Hi Desert area. Some landscapes were rocky and expansive while some were littered by of the enduring plant life. They looked into the sprawling landscapes of **Joshua Tree National Park** and **Big Morongo Canyon Preserve** and the depths of the skies above. They tested their abilities as photographers and pushed the boundaries of their skills in an environment that is unlike most others. This is a compilation of the best nature shots the Observation Post captured in the last year.



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