



LANCE CPL. PAUL S. MARTINEZ

Maj. Gen. David H Berger, Combat Center commanding general, shakes hands with Sgt. Wayne Gallagher, MCAGCC shooting team head coach, Marksmanship Training Unit, during a trophy presentation in the commanding general's conference room, March 14.

One shot, one kill: Combat Center shooting team presents marksmanship trophies

Lance Cpl. Paul S. Martinez
 Combat Correspondent

Marines with the MCAGCC Shooting Team earned multiple trophies and plaques commemorating victories in various shooting competitions throughout 2013 and formally presented them to Maj. Gen. David H Berger, Combat Center commanding general, at his conference room, March 14.

The awards were earned through competitions that required multiple firing instances of both rifle and pistol against other veteran shooters from around the country.

The 11-man shooting team was awarded plaques from the National Rifle Association service category for four-man rifle shooting, 20 shots were afforded to each team member, at the 500, 600 and 1000-yard lines. Final scores were 694, 669 and 623. The competition was held aboard the Combat Center's Range 1 in August and November of 2013.

The trophies earned included the San Diego

Trophy for Western Division matches, large-unit rifle team category and the Gen. Thomas Holcomb Trophy, for highest scoring pistol team in the Western Division matches. Both were earned aboard Wilcox Range, Marine Corps Base Camp Pendleton, Calif., spanning the tournament dates of Feb. 24 through March 7, according to Sgt. Wayne Gallagher, team head coach.

"It takes an incredible amount of work to achieve something like this," Berger said. "This doesn't come naturally. It takes a great deal of work and sacrifice."

According to Gallagher, a perfect score for pistol was 1200, with his team scoring 986. For rifle, a perfect score is 1200, and the MCAGCC team finished with a score of 1161.

"Working with each Marine on the line, I could see how each one went about the process and worked with fine-tuning their abilities and

SEE TROPHY, A6

Leatherneck Comedy Tour returns to Combat Center

Lance Cpl. Kasey Peacock
 Combat Correspondent

Marines and sailors aboard the Combat Center were treated to food, comedy and music during the second Leatherneck Comedy Tour of 2014 at the base theater, March 14.

The tour, which travels throughout various Marine Corps installations, provides entertainment to service members. The show featured comedians Byron Bowers, Jim McCue and Ben Gleib, as well as a musical performance by Eve 6.

"I have always taken gigs when the opportunity comes up to perform for the troops," said Gleib. "I can't think of a more important gig to take. I feel like as citizens we are all family in a way, and this is the least I can do to support the people who are our first line of defense."

During the show, Marines and sailors in attendance could be seen laughing and enjoying

These shows never fail to bring a good time to the Marines and sailors."

— Michael Brown

the show with their peers.

"The first time I saw this show I was in Okinawa, and I thought it was great" said Cpl. Jordan McNeal, data network specialist, Marine Wing Support Squadron 374. "I felt like they incorporated a lot more crowd participation during this show, and that made it a lot more personal and funny. It is nice to be able to come out here and enjoy the more simple things in life like a comedy show."

During the show, each comedian performed individually, before the show ended with a performance from the rock band Eve 6.

This is the second comedy tour held at the Combat Center this year, and a third and final tour for the year is scheduled to happen in August, according to Darryl Elliott, recreation attendant, Single

SEE COMEDY, A6

'Cutting Edge' transfers authority to 1/7

Story and photos by
 Cpl. Joseph Scanlan

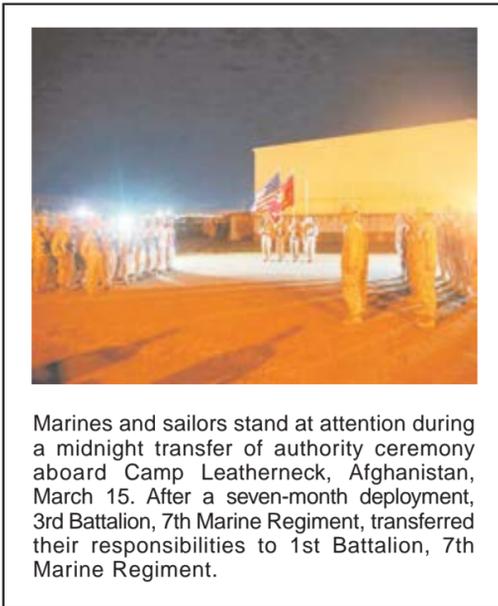
Marines and sailors stood at attention as 3rd Battalion, 7th Marine Regiment, also known as 'The Cutting Edge,' handed over the responsibilities of operations in Regional Command Southwest to 1st Battalion, 7th Marine Regiment, also known as 'First Team,' during a transfer of authority ceremony aboard Camp Leatherneck, Afghanistan, March 15.

This was the third and final deployment to Afghanistan for 3/7 and concludes their participation in Operation Enduring Freedom. With five prior deployments to Iraq, the battalion has more consecutive combat deployments than any other infantry battalion in the Marine Corps.

"The Cutting Edge's' mission was to conduct security force assistance, intelligence-driven operations and set conditions for secure and legitimate Afghan elections in 2014.

During their seven-month deployment, the battalion sustained two casualties. Lance Cpl. Casey Allison and Petty Officer 3rd Class Michael Phillips were injured from an improvised explosive device during a patrol on Jan. 28, and are currently recovering in the United States.

"Certainly by comparing it to our last deployment, the casualties are much lower," said Lt. Col. Daniel Wittnam, commanding officer, 3/7. "I think it's because we had a very distinct mission to provide security forces to assist and advise the Afghans to be able to fight the enemy, and to sus-



Marines and sailors stand at attention during a midnight transfer of authority ceremony aboard Camp Leatherneck, Afghanistan, March 15. After a seven-month deployment, 3rd Battalion, 7th Marine Regiment, transferred their responsibilities to 1st Battalion, 7th Marine Regiment.

tain them by providing medevac support, sharing intelligence and counter IED support."

"The Cutting Edge's' deployment was broken into two halves. During the first half, the Marines were in charge of retrograding gear from four forward operating bases, three of which they turned over to Afghan National Army soldiers.

The most challenging feat for 3/7, was the clo-

sure of FOB Shukvani, while FOBs Shir Ghazay, Musa Qal'eh and Kajaki were transferred to the ANA, according to Wittnam.

"Transferring a FOB is easier than retrograding a FOB, simply because we still have the security from our ANA counterpart," Wittnam said. "What made closing FOB Shukvani more difficult was the large amount of gear that had to be tracked and transported back to Camp Leatherneck."

During the second half of the deployment, Kilo and India Companies transitioned into new roles as regional operation companies. The two companies were entrusted with conducting various missions including counter insurgency, locating lethal aid, deterring enemy freedom of movement and aerial raids on enemy objectives.

Responsibilities for 3/7 came to an end at 12:01 a.m. March 15, and their sister battalion, 'First Team,' officially took over their battle space. For the past year, each Marine and sailor trained consistently for this deployment.

"We have very strong and capable staff, companies, and an outstanding crew of commanders, officers, staff noncommissioned officers, NCOs and a well-trained group of [junior] Marines," said Lt. Col. Seth Yost, commanding officer, 1/7. "Our team is excited to do our part during a historic moment in the history of Afghanistan, and we're able to do that with the support of our families."

SEE TRANSFER, A6

Award presented to 'Darkside' Marine

Story and photo by
 Lance Cpl. Paul S. Martinez

Marines with 3rd Battalion, 4th Marines, 7th Marine Regiment, or 'Darkside,' gathered at their bachelors' enlisted quarters' courtyard to honor a medal recipient, March 13.

1st. Sgt. Jack L. Shumate, company first sergeant, India Co., 3/4, was awarded a Navy and Marine Corps Commendation Medal with combat "V" for valor device.

"[The Marines] had taken a couple of [improvised explosive devices]," said Lt. Col. Jeff Kenney, commanding officer, 3/4. "[Shumate] was able to grasp control of the environment, secure the landing zone and call for

evacuation while under intense fire. It's a very deserving award."

The Marines were awarded for their service conducting combat operations in Afghanistan during the unit's deployment in March 2013.

"My Marines, most importantly, did an outstanding job performing at a level we were expected to," Shumate said. "We had no doubts during the deployment."

Darkside's last deployment was one of the final major operations for the battalion. They are slated to be deactivated this summer.

"We had an opportunity to make history with that last deployment," Shumate said. "Darkside may be going away, but it will remain with all of us forever."



Lt. Col. Jeff Kenney, commanding officer, 3rd Battalion, 4th Marines, 7th Marine Regiment, shakes hands with 1st. Sgt. Jack L. Shumate, company first sergeant, I Co., 3/4, after awarding him a Navy and Marine Corps Commendation Medal with combat "V" for valor, device at the bachelors' enlisted quarters' courtyard, March 13. "It's a very deserving award," Kenney said.

ON the road AGAIN

Frank Santiago
Safety Division

As spring approaches, we begin to see nature unveil its beauty. The air smells clean, the animals are out from hibernation, the leaves and flowers begin to bloom, the morning air is brisk and the afternoons are warm. And of course my favorite ... the motorcycles hit the roadway! Riding season is finally upon us and it's time to shed a couple layers of snivel gear so we can enjoy our ride without having to wear a quilt.

The rider population on the roadway is going to increase hugely in the next month, so please look twice for us. Some may wonder where all the bikes are coming from. It's almost as if they migrated from a warmer place during the winter. And in some odd coincidence, some riders did. They migrated to their heated automobiles and stowed their motorcycles for the winter.

If you are like me, and decided not to stow your bike away and brave the winter hardships, then you probably don't have much preparation to do for the riding months. But if you made the decision to cling to your automobile during the winter, then you might have some preparation ahead of you before considering taking your motorcycle back on the road.

Let's consider a few things before you just hop on the bike and go for a long ride. Hopefully, you took the time to break your bike down properly for the long winter. Proper storage will always simplify your checklist when prepping your

machine to get back on the streets. Ask yourself, "is your bike's fuel system clean and ready to receive fuel? Is the tank clean and free of soil or sand? Is your carburetor or injectors and lines clogged or corroded? Have you checked and cleaned/replaced the air filter? What condition is the battery in and was it left on a trickle charger for the time it wasn't being used? If you have one, do you need to flush your cooling system and go to a coolant rather than an anti-freeze for the summer? Are the forks/suspension clean and moving freely? Do the tires have good tread life and are they inflated properly? Does the bike's drive system have the proper tension and is it lubricated? Have you checked the lights and horn making sure everything activates correctly? Are the brakes working properly and do the pads need replacement? And lastly, have you checked your bikes oil level and does it need to be changed or topped off?"

Unless you find any mice nesting in your airbox, your checklist with servicing of any parts that your bike might need should only take about half a day and still leave you time to ride that afternoon. It's always better to discover an issue your bike has developed when you're in the garage rather than discovering a malfunction on the roadway.

Don't forget to take the time to reacquaint yourself with your motorcycle. Take a moment and find yourself an open parking lot and ride slowly to regain the feel of your bike. And soon enough, you'll be on the road again.



LANCE CPL. JOHN TRAN

Jessica Cheshire, operations assistant, Marine Corps Community Services; Van Nguyen, assistant chief of staff, G-1; Ernest Robinson, passenger transportation clerk, G-4; Maj. Gen. David H. Berger, Combat Center commanding general; Mrs. Donna Berger; Archie Meadows, mechanic, Exercise Support Division; Dallas Forcum, budget analyst, G-8; and Sgt. Maj. Karl Villalino, Combat Center sergeant major, gathered for the commanding general's civilian breakfast, March 14.

BIRTH ANNOUNCEMENTS

HUNTER JAY KAUFMAN
Born on: Feb. 26, 2014
Born to: Daniel and Alejandra Kaufman

SAVANNAH KANOELANI WINSOR
Born on: Feb. 28, 2014
Born to: Anthony and Catherine Winsor

SAVANNAH CATHERINE RAMIREZ
Born on: March 1, 2014
Born to: Jason and Stephanie Ramirez

Martial Arts Instructor Course

March 31 - April 18

Students who complete the course will be a minimum of a green belt instructor. Students must be a corporal or above with a grey belt or higher.

Location: Martial Arts Facility, Building 1652
For more information, contact Staff Sgt Fulgencio at 830-0290

“JUNIORS”

- Across**
- 1 Jeans material
 - 6 Work on the turkey
 - 11 One of the Bushes
 - 14 Actress Christensen
 - 15 Pale
 - 16 Before, in poems
 - 17 Hollywood starlet of the 1940s and 1950s
 - 19 Falsehood
 - 20 Solid ___ rock
 - 21 Leaves out
 - 22 Lazy person
 - 24 Balloon sounds
 - 25 “My goodness!”
 - 26 Some Louisianans
 - 29 Scoundrel
 - 33 School tests
 - 34 Quackers
 - 35 Ending for Cray or pay
 - 36 Not firm
 - 37 Greets from a distance
 - 38 Slender
 - 39 Mauna ___, Hawaii
 - 40 Having a protective barrier
 - 41 Tom of “Amadeus”
 - 42 Gave a grin to
 - 44 Kind of roll
 - 45 Meowing pets
 - 46 Clue
 - 47 “The Devil Wears ___”
 - 49 Triangular road sign

- 51 “I don’t think so”
 - 54 Hot ___ (empty talk)
 - 55 Sidewalk activity
 - 58 Not me
 - 59 Academy Award
 - 60 Say under your breath
 - 61 Bank convenience
 - 62 Necklace components
 - 63 Requires
- Down**
- 1 ___ vu
 - 2 Historical times
 - 3 One of Columbus’ ships
 - 4 Pres. Eisenhower
 - 5 Strands on an island
 - 6 Foundation
 - 7 Helper: abbr.
 - 8 “___ the One” (Bruce Springsteen song)
 - 9 ___ no.
 - 10 Joins the military
 - 11 Bakery buys
 - 12 One of the Great Lakes
 - 13 Schlitz or Heineken

- 18 Baseball strike callers, for short
- 23 One-seventh of a week
- 24 Gas station feature
- 25 Bothers
- 26 Microscopic units
- 27 Saying
- 28 Alcohol from the Caribbean
- 29 Comfy blanket
- 30 ___ coffee
- 31 Wonderland girl
- 32 Lion ___
- 34 Facts
- 37 Handfuls of cash
- 38 Hearts or spades

- 40 Find work
- 41 Most police officers carry one
- 43 Young fellow
- 44 Oven for potters
- 46 Names mentioned in a will
- 47 ___ steep price
- 48 Civil disturbance
- 49 Gym type
- 50 Apple tablet
- 51 Short letter
- 52 Mimicked
- 53 His and ___
- 56 “What’s the ___?”
- 57 Highway: abbr.

See answers on page A5

SUDOKU 3210 M

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 - Angelo's Kars, 226 S. Coast Hwy, Oceanside, Calif., 92054
- In San Diego:**
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 - 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 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

Kirsten MAHLER

Nappa, Calif. store manager, Starbucks, 28



MAHLER IS THE MANAGER AT THE STARBUCKS LOCATED IN THE MARINE CORPS EXCHANGE. SHE BECAME PROFICIENT IN BALLET AND TAP DANCING WHILE PRACTICING THOSE DANCING STYLES FOR 16 YEARS.

- > **My main hobbies** growing up were swim team and dance, and I invested a lot of time into both.
- > **I practiced ballet, tap,** and dance for 16 years and I worked hard on all three but I favored tap.
- > **Although I never competed** in dance, there was an annual recital that used to be held where I could showcase my talent and those are cherished memories for me.
- > **Because of the confidence** I got through dance, I've never been afraid to be in front of people and speak with confidence and that makes for a good leadership quality.
- > **Dance began to take** a toll after a while when I had school and then dance practice for a few hours right after.
- > **Keeping an up-tempo** schedule like that from the age of 3 became a challenge, but the hard work paid off when I would perform in front of an audience.
- > **One of the major lessons** dance taught me was to keep smiling after any mistake or accident. That lesson carries over into life as well because when a person makes a mistake it won't help the situation to be critical on yourself or stop everything to keep thinking about it. The show must go on. You have to accept the mistake and just keep smiling and performing to keep the show going.
- > **I began lifeguarding** from a young age and did that as a job for the summer seasons. I didn't participate in my school's swim team but I was good enough to manage pools.
- > **My first exposure to** lifeguarding was through the Junior Lifeguard Program.

- > **It was through this** avenue that I realized how much I love to help people.
- > **I want to be** the type of person that people can rely on in an emergency. I enjoy the challenge of working under pressure and being able to tell someone 'don't worry ... I got this.'
- > **I learned a great deal** about responsibility from just being a lifeguard myself to becoming the person that was teaching others to save lives in the pool.
- > **Lifeguarding was not only** my first job, it was also a good stepping stone for my goals to get into the medical field.
- > **It was great moving out** and becoming an Emergency Medical Technician because it was all the things I enjoyed doing without all the paperwork.
- > **Just being able to** help people when their lives were in danger was a great privilege.
- > **I moved out here** and began working with Marine Corps Community Services and I love my job, although my goal of getting into the medical field is halted for now, I'm very focused on where I am in my life currently.
- > **Managing the Starbucks** on base is great because we get to have an impact on someone's day whether that's with good manners or coffee to get them through the morning.
- > **I love being able** to run a store that helps Marines and people on base with their day-to-day routines.
- > **I've put down my** dancing shoes but I know I want my children to dance and learn all the valuable life lessons it taught me growing up.
- > **My kids are still** too young to start learning dance, but when they do, I want them to learn the value of being able take anything that life can throw at you, brush it off and keep smiling and performing just as I did.

Interviewed and photographed by Lance Cpl. Charles Santamaria March 11, 2014

SUDOKU SOLUTIONS

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CROSSWORD SOLUTIONS

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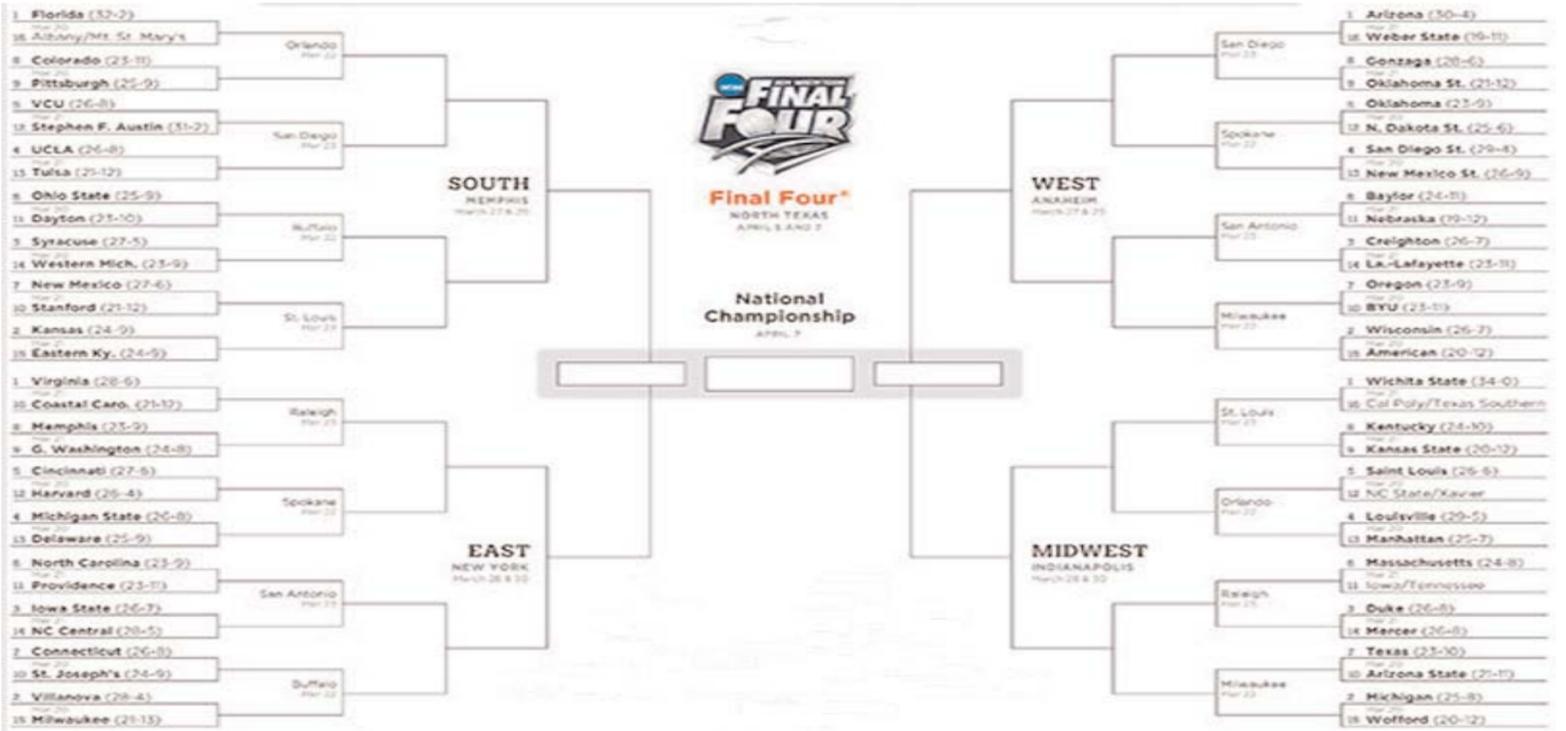
See page B2 for Sunset Cinema movie schedule



March

Madness

Story by Lance Cpl. Kasey Peacock



A certain ailment can be seen and felt throughout the U.S. this time of year. It can be seen at the grocery store, in the gymnasium or at the workplace. It is nothing a doctor can fix, or your local corpsman. The ailment can be fierce, often leaving one feeling “mad.”

This ailment, known as “March Madness,” takes the nation by storm every year. There is no cure, and no medication to rid one of this madness; however, it is advised to sit back, root for your team, and enjoy the ride.

“March Madness” began in Illinois. The annual tournament of high school boys basketball teams, sponsored by the Illinois High School Association, grew from a small invitational affair in 1908 to a statewide institution with over 900 schools competing by the late 1930s. It was also during this time that college-level teams were invited to compete against one another, according to the official Illinois High School Association webpage.

The name “March Madness” became the official title in the 1950s because of Henry V. Porter, assistant executive secretary of the Illinois High School Association, who was so impressed by the phenomenon happening in Illinois that he wrote an essay to commemorate the event, titled “March Madness.”

Today, the March Madness tournament is full of nail-biting games and tales of underdog teams making

it to the top. The tournament invites the top 68 college teams from across the nation to participate in the single-elimination tournament.

Thirty-two teams earn automatic bids as their respective conference champions. The remaining 36 tournament slots are granted by bids, which are determined by an NCAA selection committee in a nationally televised event known as Selection Sunday.

Each team is then ranked within its region. After

“I have always enjoyed college basketball much more than professional [basketball] because of the traditions.”

— Pfc. Joel Lowden

the initial four games between the eight lowest-ranked teams, the tournament continues over the course of three weekends, at pre-selected neutral gymnasiums around the U.S.

“I have always been a die-hard Kansas University fan,” said Pfc. Austin Kirby, administrative specialist, Headquarters Battalion. “Growing up, my grandfather and I used to watch all the

Kansas games. Even though we can’t make that possible now, I still find the time during March Madness to watch Kansas play.”

Much like college, which is full of history and rituals, the tournament is no different. The winning team cuts down the nets at the end of regional championship games, known as the Final Four, as well as the national championship game. Starting with the seniors, and moving down by classes, players each cut a single strand off of each rim; and the head coach cuts the last strand connecting the net to the hoop, signifying the championship victory.

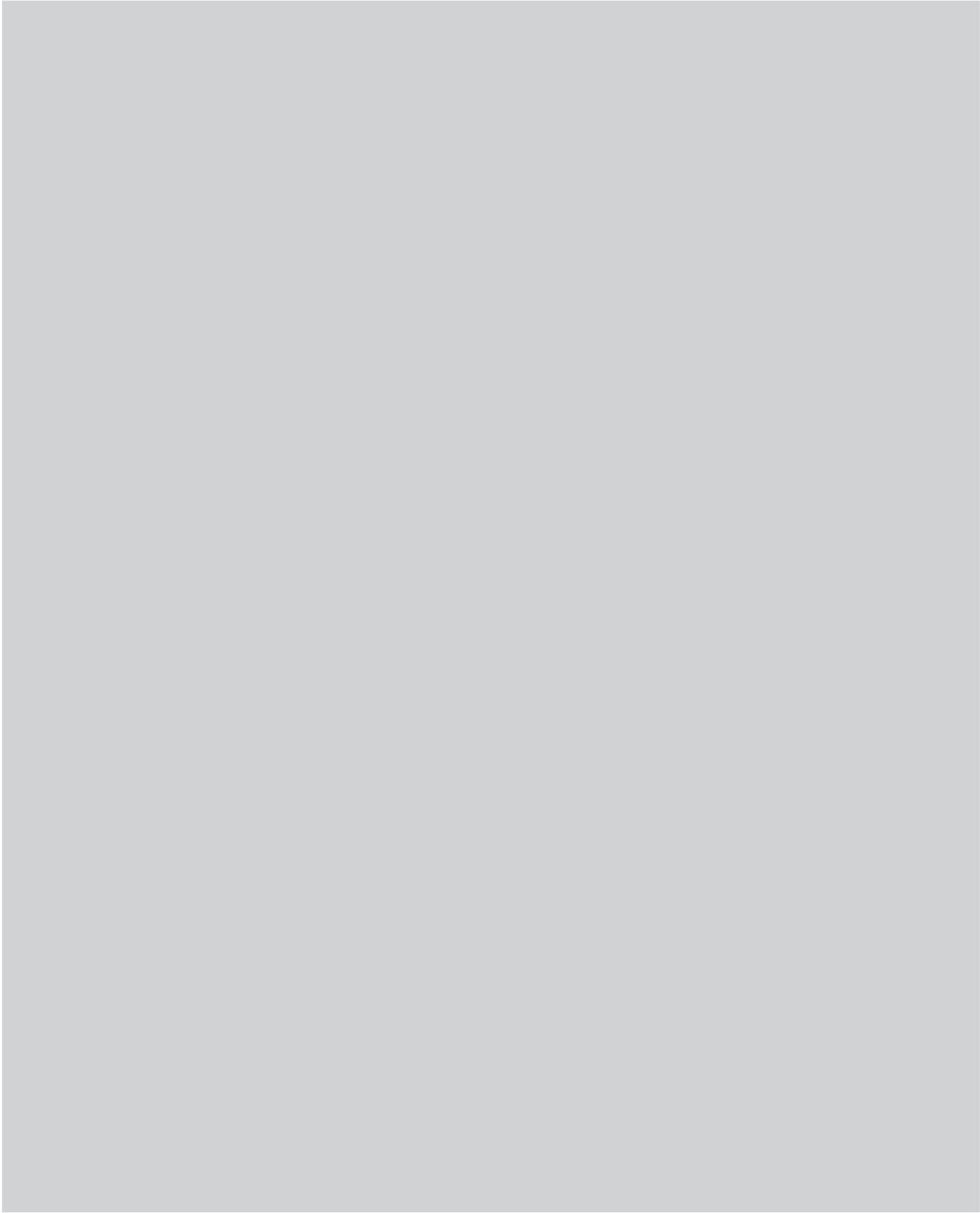
“I have always enjoyed college basketball much more than professional [basketball] because of the traditions,” said Pfc. Joel Lowden, combat engineer, 3rd Combat Engineer Battalion. “Just watching the games is much more exciting. The players always look like they are playing their heart out, and not just for money.”

The first round of the tournament began Wednesday, and the second round games will go through Thursday and today.

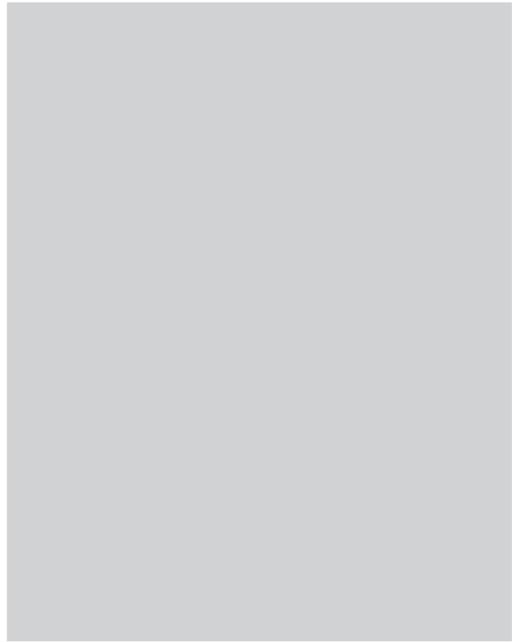
After tournament euphoria fizzles out and a champion is crowned, the “madness” fades, but like any virus, it stays with you, only to return year after year in March.

For information on game locations and times, visit www.ESPN.com.

LOOKING for local entertainment?
See page B2 for our **LIBERTY CALL** section




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



Horse Ranch *Volunteer Event*

Photos by Lance Cpl. Kasey Peacock



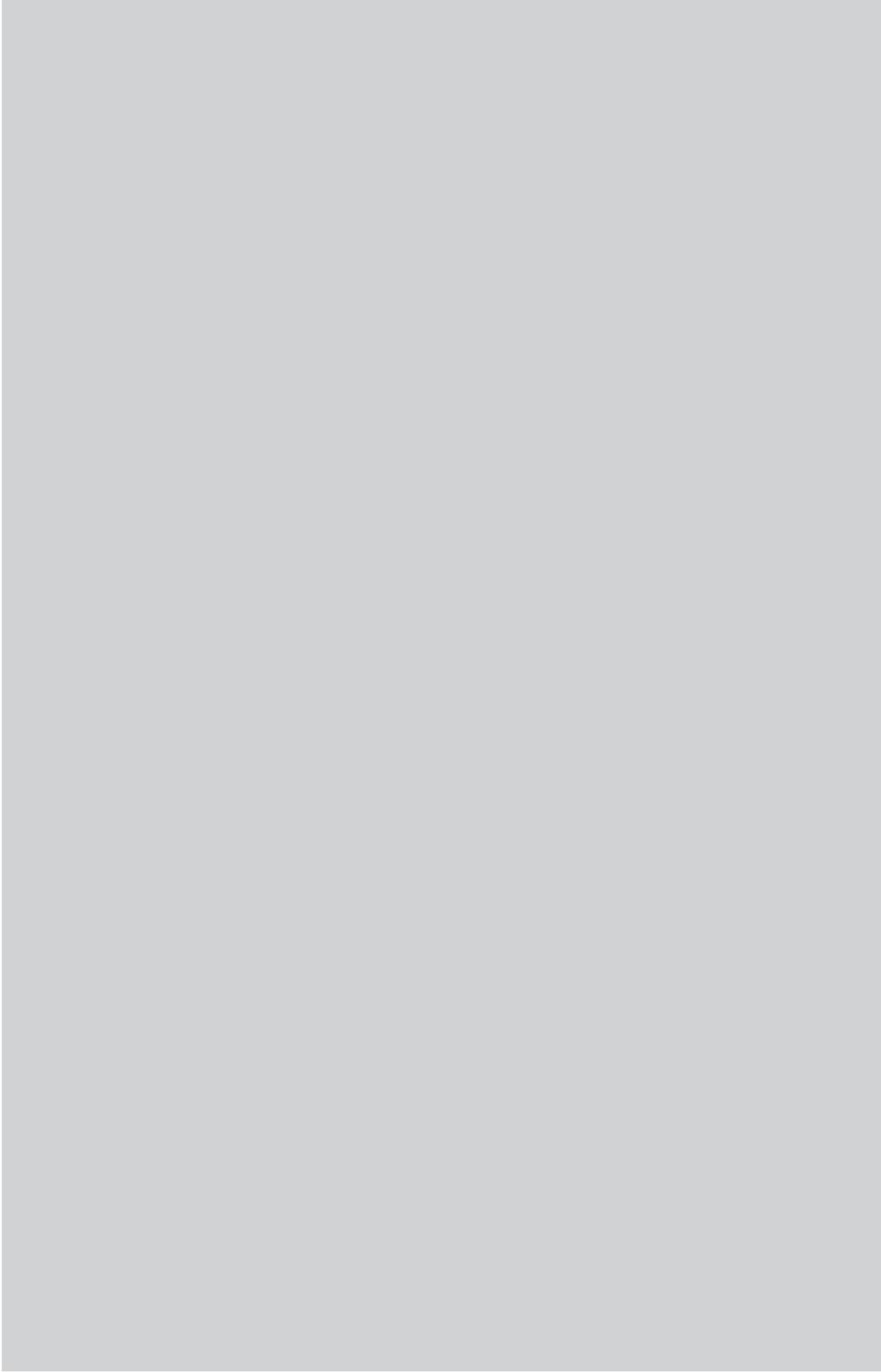
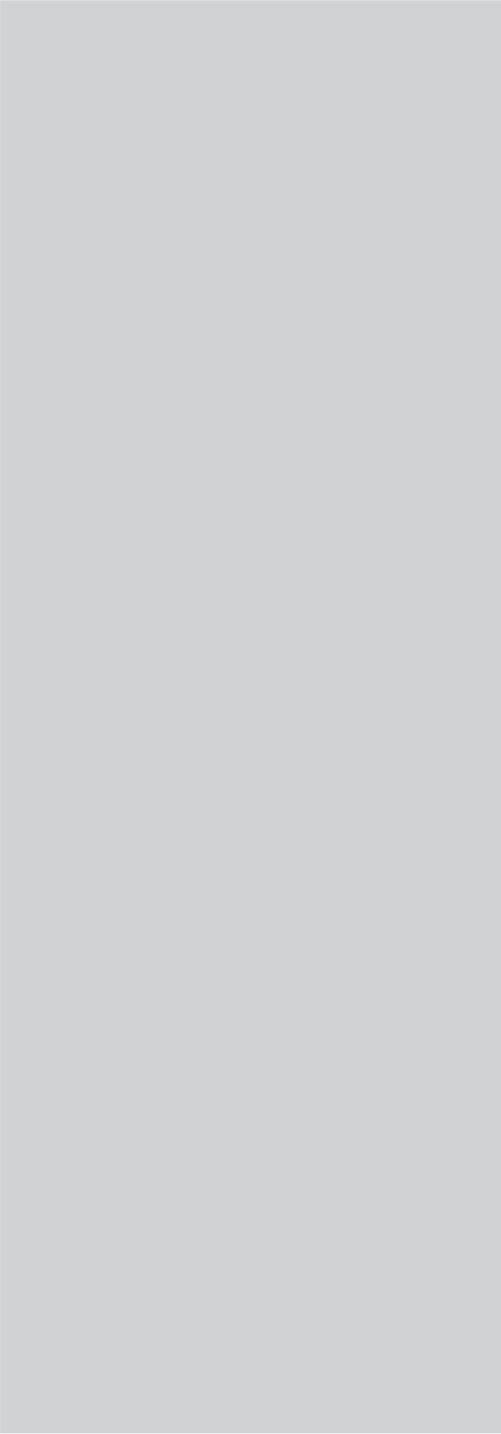
Combat Center Marines visited the Brenda, Scott and Tootie Ranch in Twentynine Palms, Calif., to assist with feeding and cleaning, Sunday. The Marines volunteered to help at the ranch through the Single Marine Program.

[Above] Lance Cpl. Ernesto Hernandez, food service specialist, 1st Tank Battalion, pets an Appaloosa horse at the Brenda, Scott and Tootie Ranch in Twentynine Palms, Calif., Sunday. The BST Ranch has anywhere from 10-50 horses depending on the time of year.

[Right] Combat Center Marines clean a stable at the Brenda, Scott and Tootie Ranch in Twentynine Palms, Calif., Sunday. The BST Ranch is a non-profit, rescue ranch that nurtures malnourished horses back to health and attempts to find them new homes.



Relax with the paper
Hi-Desert Star | The Desert Trail | The Observation Post



TROPHY, from A1

knowing their personalities," Gallagher said.

The team stood in a line as Berger individually recognized each one for their contribution to coming out a cut above the rest.

"It is about the team," said Chief Warrant Officer 4 Duane Ledford, gunner, Combat Center. "These Marines, I believe, did so well because they know it's not just them, it's one team."

Their achievement can now be recognized with the display of the trophies and plaques at the Marksmanship Training Unit Range House. For the Marines, the future is one of change after coming together to fulfill this opportunity to be the best.

"In the future, everyone will be either going back to their parent commands or leaving in some fashion," Gallagher said. "The team next year will likely be completely fresh."

The next generation of MCAGCC shooters will have big shoes to fill with the mark left by the Marines that diligently earned these distinctive awards.



LANCE CPL. PAUL S MARTINEZ

[Above] Maj. Gen. David H Berger, Combat Center commanding general, makes his remarks during the MCAGCC Shooting Team's trophy presentation at the commanding general's conference room, March 14. "It takes an incredible amount of work to achieve something like this," Berger said. "This doesn't come naturally. It takes a great deal of work and sacrifice."

[Below] The plaques and trophies earned by the MCAGCC shooting team sit on display at the commanding general's conference room, March 14.



LANCE CPL. PAUL S MARTINEZ

COMEDY, from A1

Marine Program.

"We usually only get one tour a year. This year we got three," said Elliott. "We get a lot of positive feedback from the shows. It's a great opportunity for the Marines and sailors here to enjoy a fun, free afternoon full of entertainment."

This year's tour will see 22 scheduled shows at installations both stateside and overseas, according to Michael A. Brown, program specialist, Single Marines Program, Headquarters Marine Corps.

"These shows never fail to bring a good time to the Marines and sailors and we hope to keep providing that," Brown added.



LANCE CPL. KASEY PEACOCK

Marines and sailors aboard the Combat Center cheer on the next performer during the Leatherneck Comedy Tour show at the base theater, March 14.

TRANSFER, from A1

No different from their past deployments, they have a rigorous mission ahead. Their mission is to conduct limited offensive operations, security force assistance to defeat enemy forces throughout their battlespace, and set conditions for the transfer of full security responsibilities to Afghan National Security Forces in Helmand Province.

full transfer of security responsibilities.

"This is largely due to the efforts of all the 7th Marines battalions," Yost said. "One unique thing we have is 7th Marines has been deployed to Helmand Province for some time, so the battalions that came before us have set conditions to facilitate that transition to allow the ANSF to take control of their security situation."

Initially, 'First Team' will be ready to support the ANSF during the presidential elections in April. They will also have the opportunity to complete the

With fully trained, prepared and motivated Marines and Navy corpsmen, they will work toward mission accomplishment during their final deployment in support of OEF.



Sgt. Maj. Chasen Getty, left, sergeant major, 1st Battalion, 7th Marine Regiment, and Lt. Col. Seth Yost, right, commanding officer, 1/7, stand at attention during a transfer of authority ceremony aboard Camp Leatherneck, Afghanistan, March 15.



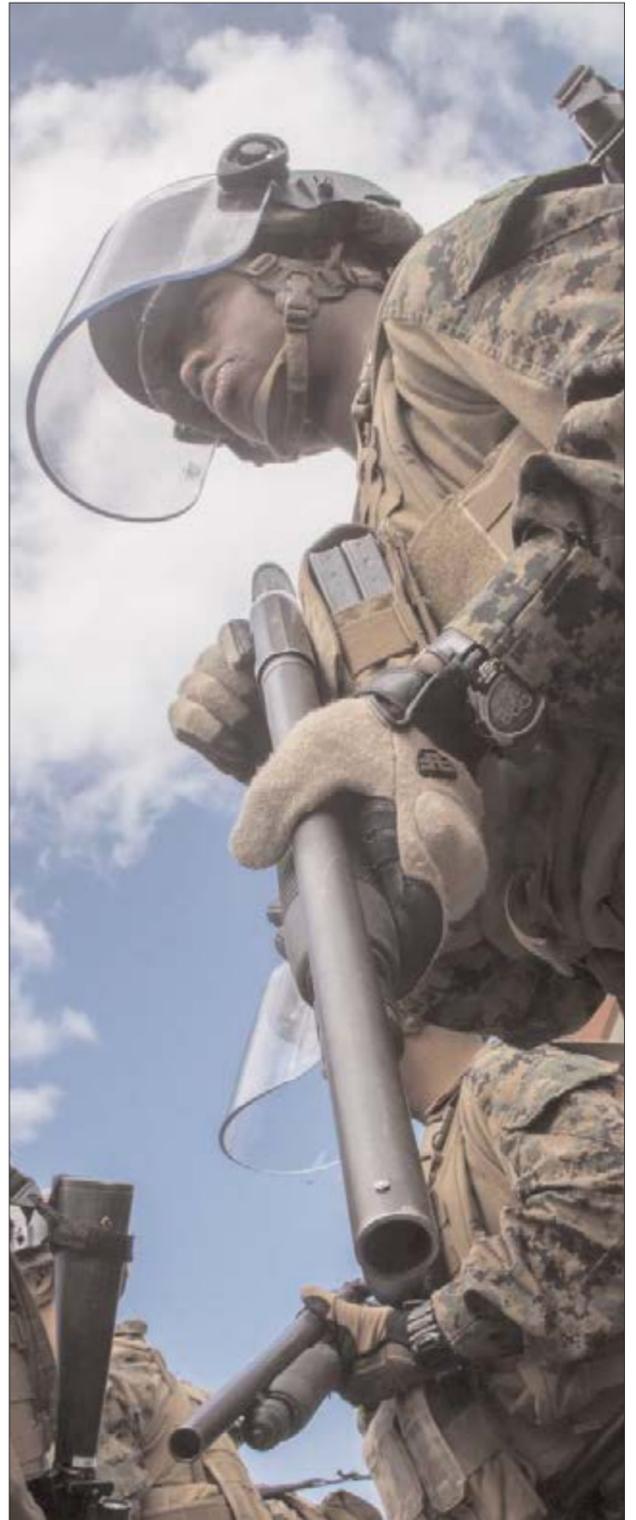
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WeekINPhotos

31st Marine Expeditionary Unit



PHOTOS BY SGT. JONATHAN G. WRIGHT



[Top, left] Lance Cpl. Kevin A. Monroe, field artillery cannoneer, Battery G, Battalion Landing Team, 2nd Battalion, 5th Marines, 31st Marine Expeditionary Unit, shields himself from protesters during a mock hostile protest, Saturday.

[Bottom, left] Marines with Battery G, BLT, 2/5, 31st MEU, acting as the security force for an American embassy, hold off protesters from the embassy gate during a mock hostile protest, Saturday. The training is in support of 31st MEU's Certification Exercise, a training package that tests the capabilities of the MEU in a variety of scenarios and is evaluated by members of the Special Operations Training Group, III Marine Expeditionary Force.

[Right] Lance Cpl. Jadriero T. Gant, field artillery cannoneer, Battery G, BLT, 2/5, 31st MEU, prepares his riot shotgun for possible use during a mock hostile protest, Saturday. The simulated embassy is home to the 31st MEU's Forward Command Element, a command cell that coordinates with a host nation's government to organize the delivery of humanitarian assistance and disaster relief supplies to people in need.



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<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>

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Experimental combat unit integrating female Marines

Story by Gunnery Sgt. Scott Dunn

The Marine Corps plans to stand up an experimental task force comprised of both men and women volunteers in primarily ground-combat-arms specialties for about a year so analysts can assess their performance, the general officer overseeing the Marine Corps' force-integration planning effort said March 10.

Brig. Gen. George W. Smith Jr. said one of the Corps' four efforts in a deliberate, measured and responsible approach to integrating women into combat units and occupational specialties by Jan. 1, 2016 – the Defense Department's deadline for full integration across the services – will be borne by the Ground Combat Element Experimental Task Force.

Pending final approval of human-research requirements, the approximately 460-Marine task force is slated to activate this summer at Camp Lejeune, N.C., allowing informed, female Marines the opportunity to volunteer as test subjects in occupational specialties that have been heretofore held only by men.

Guidance for commanders and instructions for volunteers will be published in a Marine administrative message at a later date.

The task force will be comprised of about 25 percent women and will help the Corps assess the outcome of physical demands Marines must meet in the execution of individual and collective tasks, Smith said.

This pilot effort will simulate the functions of an expeditionary unit's ground-combat element, Smith said.

"It will look somewhat like a small version of a battalion landing team in that it's got an infantry nucleus, and then it will have those attachments – tanks, artillery, (tracked amphibious landing vehicles) and the like, with a headquarters element," Smith said.

Planners also intend to send the task force to the Corps' premier combat training center in Twentynine Palms, Calif., and to mountain-warfare training in Bridgeport, Calif.

"We expect them to deploy for training into those two locations, in addition to what they'll do at Camp Lejeune," Smith said. "They may be based at Camp Lejeune, but our units deploy ... to train in those very, very different environments with unique demands associated with those environments."

The task force's headquarters element – slated to have a male commander and a female senior-enlisted advisor – is expected to stand up sometime this summer, with volunteers arriving in the fall.



COURTESY PHOTO

Marines with a Female Engagement Team fire at paper targets during a marksmanship training exercise aboard Marine Corps Base Camp Pendleton, Calif., June 30, 2010.

Female volunteers accepted for the task force's combat-arms cohort must first report to military occupational specialty schools to learn the entry-level tasks for respective ground-combat-arms jobs.

Since October 2013, 40 female Marine volunteers have completed infantry rifleman training at the School of Infantry in Camp Lejeune; however, the Corps needs to continue measuring female performance beyond entry-level tasks, Smith said.

He said all Marines must have "the physical capacity to meet the demands of those occupational specialties in the operating forces, which in some cases is significantly different and greater than what we find in our entry-level training pipeline."

Smith gave hiking as an example and mentioned the 20-kilometer hike required to complete entry-level infantry training. He said although it is "something to certainly be proud of," it is a one-time event that must be sustained in the operating forces. He went on to describe the standard, progressive hike program a Marine must undergo at an infantry battalion – conceding it was an extreme example: "You do a hike program over the course of many months. You're hiking, week in and week out, extended distances well in excess of 20 kilometers."

"We are not going to lower the standards, and I want all Marines everywhere to understand that. We are America's premier fighting force"

– Gen. James F. Amos



Lance Cpl. Kristi Baker and Seaman Shannon Crowley, members of a Female Engagement Team, 1st Battalion, 8th Marines, Regimental Combat Team 2, listen to a briefing before heading out on patrol in Musa Qaleh, Afghanistan, November 20, 2010.

ing, which officials announced March 12.

1. Since 2012, female officers and staff noncommissioned officers have had the opportunity to serve in more than 20 ground-combat-arms battalions that were previously closed to women. Sergeants and corporals will now have the same opportunity, and females will now be assigned at the company and battery levels.

2. Female Marine recruits will have the opportunity to volunteer for more ground-combat-arms schools following their graduation from boot camp, much like the Corps has been doing with its infantry rifleman training since September 2013. The additional schools include more infantry training such as machine gunner, mortarman, assaultman and anti-tank missileman courses, as well as artillery cannoner, tank crewman and assault amphibian vehicle crewman courses.

3. Pending completion of Congressional notification, the Marine Corps will open 11 occupational specialties in three previously closed fields: artillery, ground ordnance maintenance and low-altitude air defense. Following the opening of these military occupational specialties, the Corps will have 20 of its 335 primary MOSs closed.

The efforts are unprecedented; however, Smith pointed to the Corps' decades of incremental integration: "I'll use the aviation-combat element as an example: We've had fully integrated combat squadrons for 20 years. We just had our first female squadron commander a couple years ago. They've performed tremendously in Iraq and Afghanistan – pilots, aircrew, maintainers; you name it – fully integrated, fully cohesive, high-morale squadrons."

The recent research efforts are near-term but Smith said they are meant to shape the Marine Corps for decades to come: "As we do this, the commandant has been absolutely clear that we are going to maintain the highest levels of combat readiness – the combat readiness that America demands of her Marines."

Smith said female Marines have time and again expressed to the commandant that all they want is the opportunity to compete on an equitable playing field, and given the mandates of the Secretary of Defense, the Marine Corps must gather all it can in the next 18 months "to ensure that when we open a MOS, that our female Marines are



Cpl. Taylor Mejia, intelligence analyst, 3rd Marine Aircraft Wing (Forward), practices speed and tactical reloads at Camp Leatherneck, Afghanistan, April 22, 2010.

going to be successful in that MOS."

And success, Smith said, must be measured beyond entering into that occupational specialty and getting to that unit: "It is being successful over a truly viable career path, over the course of 20 or even 30 years."

The Corps may request an exception to the Department of Defense policy if opening certain units or occupational specialties by deadline does not meet specific guidelines. That includes ensuring mission readiness as well as viable career paths.

"We are not going to lower the standards, and I want all Marines everywhere to understand that," Amos said. "We are America's premier fighting force. When the Klaxon sounds, and they say, 'Send in the Marines,' we are going to be ready, and we better be ready because the first time we fail, then America quite honestly doesn't need a Marine Corps anymore."



Liberty Call



Combat Center Events

Father-Daughter Dance

This event includes refreshments to enjoy and a complimentary photo. Tickets can be purchased at ITT in the Main Exchange.

When: March 28

Where: Building 1707

For more information, call 830-3841

March Madness

All games and top standings can be viewed at the 5th Street Zone. Turn in brackets March 21 for a chance to win a prize.

When: March 16 - April 7

Where: 5th Street Zone

For more information, call 830-4767

Bunny Bowling

Registration is open at the Community Center now through April 11. The event is open to all active duty, retirees, MCCS employees and their families.

When: March 3 - April 11

Where: Sandy Hill Lanes Bowling Center

For more information, call 830-3910

Coping with Work and Family Stress

This workshop will cover a wide range of active coping skills and ways to make better use of social networks.

Where: Bldg. 1530, Classroom 303

When: Tues. 2 - 3:30 p.m. and Thurs. 9 - 10:30 a.m.

For more information, call 830-5035

For more events, visit <http://www.mccs29palms.com>

Sunset Cinema

Friday, March 21

5 p.m. - The LEGO Movie, PG

7 p.m. - About Last Night, R

9:30 p.m. - Winter's Tale PG-13

12 a.m. - RoboCop, PG-13

Saturday, March 22

10:00 a.m. - Free Admission Walking with Dinosaurs, PG

12 p.m. - The LEGO Movie 3-D, PG

2:30 p.m. - Labor Day, PG-13

5 p.m. - Endless Love, PG-13

7 p.m. - Vampire Academy, PG-13

10 p.m. - RoboCop, PG-13

12:30 a.m. - The Monuments Men, PG-13

Sunday, March 23

12:30 p.m. - The LEGO Movie, PG

3 p.m. - The Monuments Men, PG-13

6 p.m. - Pompeii 3-D, PG-13

8:30 p.m. - Non-Stop, PG-13

Monday, March 24

6 p.m. - Winter's Tale, PG -13

Tuesday, March 25

5 p.m. - The LEGO Movie 3-D, PG

7:30 p.m. - RoboCop, PG-13

Wednesday, March 26

5 p.m. - Vampire Academy, PG-13

7:30 p.m. - Pompeii 3-D, PG-13

Thursday, March 27

5 p.m. - That Awkward Moment, R

7 p.m. - Labor Day, PG-13

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.

Farndale Murder Mystery

A dramatic murder mystery on Farndale Avenue

When: 7 p.m., Feb. 28 through March 29

Where: Theatre 29

73637 Sullivan Rd., Twentynine Palms, Calif.

For more information, call (760) 316-4151

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NEIL POND

"The LEGO Movie"

Starring the voices of Chris Pratt, Morgan Freeman & Elizabeth Banks

Directed by Phil Lord and Christopher Miller

PG, 100 min.

Since their introduction in Denmark in 1949, Lego construction toys have spread all over the world, across multiple generations and throughout the reaches of pop culture. In addition to almost endless varieties of play sets, characters and components, there are also Lego videogames, Lego clothes, Lego competitions, and Lego amusement parks in Europe, North America and Asia.

Now there's a Lego movie — and more people have seen it than any other film in America since it opened earlier this year.

Clearly, Legos are immensely popular playthings. But "The Lego Movie" is also an exceptionally well-done, wildly entertaining piece of family-friendly fare, a rare piece of work that engages both grownups and kids with a sharp, smart writing, gonzo wit and a story that bridges cross-generational audiences.

Brilliant digital animation creates a teeming, brick-by-brick Lego world — several of them, in fact — and a sprawling cast of Lego characters: Emmet (Chris Pratt), a everyday, by-the-book construction worker nubbins who may — or may not — be the fulfillment of a long-ago prophesy foretold by Vitruvius (Morgan Freeman), a blind seer; Wyldstyle (Elizabeth Banks), a beautiful female resistance fighter; Metal Beard (Nick Offerman), a walking

maritime junkyard of a pirate; Batman (Will Arnett), Superman (Channing Tatum) and the Green Lantern (Jonah Hill); Lord Business, an evil control freak who wants to micro-manage everything and everyone; and Bad Cop/Good Cop (Liam Neeson), a literally two-faced law-enforcement officer.

Co-directors and writers Phil Lord and Christopher Miller, whose growing collaborative résumé includes the movies "21 Jump Street" and "Cloudy With a Chance of Meatballs" and TV's "How I Met Your Mother" and "Brooklyn Nine-Nine," weave themes of creativity, independence and cooperation into a story that runs on a crazy rail of nearly nonstop pop-cultural riffs and satirical references, understated comedic nuance as well as explosively absurd visual magic, and just the right tones of subversive cool for a movie that needs to appeal to children as well as parents.

Early in the movie, Emmet gets in his Lego car, turns on the radio and hears a song, "Everything is Awesome." It's meant to be a big supersonic joke, an ironic mantra-like jab about conformity in a place where being mindlessly happy is mandatory. But it's infectious as all get-out, and it becomes the movie's theme. (It's performed by the Canadian indie duo Tegan and Sara and the comedy-rap group the Lonely Island, and produced by Devo's Mark Mothersbaugh.)

And like the interlocking pieces of the gazillions of Legos it would have taken to make this movie if it weren't for the digital magic of computer animation, the song just fits. Yep, in this joyous, joke-filled parable about the joy of making stuff, the power of imagination and the pursuit of special-ness, everything pretty much IS awesome.



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The Combat Center has its own YouTube channel. Find it at



The Combat Center has its own Flickr photo and video streams. Find them at

<http://www.facebook.com/thecombatcenter>

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

<http://www.flickr.com/thecombatcenter>



COURTESY PHOTO

[Left] A Marine probes an area after his ground-penetrating radar metal detector sets off an alarm in Afghanistan. Counter-improvised explosive device systems such as this are under scrutiny by the C-IED War Room at Marine Corps Systems Command, Marine Corps Base Quantico, Va.

[Bottom] Marines sweep a road in Afghanistan using counter-IED systems. Out of more than 90 C-IED systems used in support of Operation Enduring Freedom, fewer than 35 types of programs remain in the budget after a funding reduction. Cutting out unneeded or redundant systems is the War Room's task.

War room maps path for counter-IED systems

Jim Katzaman
MCSC Corporate Communications

Counter-improvised explosive device systems come in many shapes and sizes, all of which have saved lives in Southwest Asia. Now the changing face of the fight and budget constraints demand paring down the array of C-IED systems to those that prevent the most bang for the buck.

The task for taking a hard look at the explosive detectors is in the analytical eyes within the C-IED War Room, formed at Marine Corps Systems Command in Quantico, Va. There, specialists ranging from cost analysts, systems engineers, database developers and C-IED analysts take inventory of what systems best protect Marines and merit carryover to future conflicts.

Together they faced a challenge: Given the significant funding reduction after Operation Enduring Freedom and the rebalance to the Pacific, the team had to develop a way to assess paths forward from what had grown into a huge array of C-IED equipment.

Out of more than 90 C-IED systems used in OEF, fewer than 35 types of programs remain in the budget, according to Kyle Ratliff, cost analyst,

MCSC Programs. Cutting out unneeded or redundant systems is the War Room's task.

"We identified systems the Marine Corps was using regardless of whether they were used jointly or just by Marines," Ratliff said. "Some Marines didn't think of some equipment as C-IED systems because they were used for other reasons. That's where we stepped in and used funding constraints to prioritize what to keep and what not to keep."

As much as possible, the team worked from the perspective of Marines on the ground.

"The War Room's job is to make sure we identify the best mix of systems that will work for Marines," said Dave Karcher, project officer, Energy and C-IED systems.

The War Room's work is complex — and essential — because the Marine Corps and Army have different schedules and support structures as they withdraw from Afghanistan, Karcher added.

"We're mapping our capability to the priorities of the Marine Corps," he said. "We came up with a tool set and process to give recommendations and assessments. These provide technical justification for decisions to be made on the overall C-IED system."

One of the tools is the C-IED War Room itself, situated next to MCSC headquarters at MCB Quantico, Va. From their work, which fills four walls, the group

will issue a series of recommendations over time, according to Jeff Kent, C-IED War Room lead.

"We want to be agile because the threat is changing," he said.

One thing not changing is the weight the average Marine can bear. Here, too, the C-IED War Room has done its part to lighten the load.

"A lot of the C-IED equipment is heavy," Kent said. "This was our opportunity to lighten things up for the Marine Corps. Rather than buy one more item, maybe we could use two pieces of equipment already in use to make the system work."

To help the C-IED team make the best recommendation, they have tapped into the Framework for Assessment of Cost and Technology modeling and simulation server. A C-IED tool will run on FACT to verify the group's proposals.

Although the War Room team has almost finished two phases of assessments and prepared recommendations, their work will continue in some form for the foreseeable future.

"We accomplished what we set out to do, but the effort continues," Kent said. "We'll always need to enhance and maintain our database. Wrapping up what we're doing here is actually ramping up to build upon our work."



COURTESY PHOTO