

MCAGCC TWENTYNINE PALMS OBSERVATION POST

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Desert SCIMITAR



Story and photos by
Cpl. Lauren A. Kurkumills

3rd LAR attacks prison in unique exercise

The full moon shone as dozens of light-armored vehicles quietly sat idle in the still of night. At first, only a faint breeze could be heard until one by one, the LAVs fired up and collectively spilled a climbing rumble across the desert. Four hours from their objective and five from the break of dawn, 3rd Light Armored Reconnaissance Battalion set forth on a unique multi-installation training exercise that would culminate across miles of desert, outside of the Combat Center, at an abandoned prison.

From May 12 to May 17, 1st Marine Division is conducting a large-scale, combined-arms, live-fire exercise integrating aviation and logistical support, known as Desert Scimitar. This operation includes a mock raid of Boron Prison Complex during a training exercise, encompassing training at the Combat Center, Marine Corps Logistics Base Barstow, Calif., Fort Irwin National Training Center and the prison.

"Our mission was to conduct a battalion-level raid on Division objective one, the Boron Prison," said Sgt. Sean Krauss, battalion commander's gunner, Jump Platoon, Headquarters and Service Company, 3rd LAR. "The main effort was made by (Company C), artillery and engineers."

The unit began at the Combat Center and traveled through the base, exiting at the northwest boundary of the training area. After posting at an off-base location, the raid was to ensue in the early hours of the next morning.

"Exiting the base through the northwest boundary was somewhat of a first and kind of unique," said Lt. Col. Matt Good, battalion commander, 3rd LAR. "It also required a great deal of coordination by the MCAGCC staff."

During the exercise, artillery fired notional rounds

followed by C Co. rushing the objective.

"It was a known enemy position that was equipped with anti-aircraft radar, which meant they couldn't perform a helo raid so, they used 3rd LAR," Krauss said. "Once they were there, they conducted sensitive-site exploitation, which is where they obtain additional intelligence or information."

When they arrived however, the prison was no longer abandoned. Role-players occupied the complex, armed with rifles, waiting to greet the Marines by firing blank rounds.

"First Marine Division provided the role players at the Boron Prison and that helped to make things much more realistic," Krauss said. "The Marines had never been out here before, so the fact that it was a completely new environment made it that much more challenging for them. Getting off base and being able to travel far distances to get to the objective adds a lot to the training."

Once the raid was completed, the unit pulled back to Tactical Assembly Area 3 at MCLB Barstow to reconsolidate, refuel and exploit the labors of the training exercise.

"This was a limited offensive operation that really

See DESERT, A6



'Cutting Edge' Marine promoted after deployment

Photo and story by Lance Cpl. Kasey Peacock

Capt. James Covey, Company K commanding officer, 3rd Battalion, 7th Marine Regiment, authenticates Cpl. Zachary Bowden, rifleman, 3/7, and Sgt. Dominic Epkey, rifleman, 3/7, to pin Cpl. Casey Allison, rifleman, 3/7 during his promotion ceremony at Building 1436 aboard the Combat Center, May 8.

During the ceremony, Allison was accompanied by his wife, Mia Allison, as well as their infant daughter, Ava, whom he met for the first time when he returned from deployment in March.

Covey presented Allison with the promotion warrant as the company looked on. Allison lost his right leg below the knee and his left ring and pinky finger when he stepped on an improvised explosive device in Afghanistan, Feb. 28, 2014.

Allison will receive a Purple Heart Medal and honorable discharge, and will return to his native state of Oregon.

Shortly before their return to the Combat Center, the battalion was relieved by 1/7 during closing operations in Afghanistan.



[Left] Marines finish their knots during the knot-tying portion of the Instructor Qualification Course at the lower base camp of MWTC, May 1. A line of rope was tied in two directions allowing students to practice tying knots while the instructors evaluated them.

Instructor Qualification Course empowers Marines

Story and photos by
Cpl. Charles Santamaria

The Marine Corps Mountain Warfare Training Center is known for its mountainous terrain and varied training during the winter and summer seasons. With the challenges of the area, the command needs Marines who know how to navigate, can travel through routes by alternative means, and teach units how they can handle the environment that makes up the MCMWTC.

Mountain warfare instructors are trained to know a variety of skills that

will be most beneficial in the training area. Knots play a fundamental part in what the instructors teach by having several uses for the different types.

During the process of the Instructor Qualification Course, Marines spend hours of repetition trying to obtain the muscle memory needed to master these knots effectively. From one-rope bridges to tying gear onto a mule for transport and lifting heavy gear onto a cliff with rope, the techniques the instructors use to secure anything that must be moved is dependent on their effectiveness using the knots taught during the course.

'Wardogs' take load off with barracks bash

Cpl. Charles Santamaria
Combat Correspondent

Laughter and good times filled Del Valle Field as the "Wardogs" of 2nd Battalion, 7th Marine Regiment, took a much-needed break from the busy training schedule. Marines old and new to the unit spent time with each other and shared food and refreshments in a setting that encouraged good fun and camaraderie. The battalion trains to sharpen its Marines to be at the highest level of readiness, but on Saturday, the battalion took some time to relax and unwind for all the hard work its Marines have done. Coming from multiple field operations, 2/7 hosted a barracks bash at

Having events like this after a long duration in the field is important to let the Marines blow off steam and be together."

- Sgt. Maj. Frederick Smith

Del Valle Field, Saturday.

The event was coordinated by Diane Durden, family readiness officer, 2/7, and the battalion's senior leadership to build camaraderie among the Marines and allow the unit to relax before the next training cycle.

"There are approximately 500 to 600 Marines who live in the barracks," said Sgt. Maj. Frederick Smith, battalion sergeant major, 2/7. "Having events like this, after a long duration in the field, is important to let the Marines blow off steam and be together."

The event also helps alleviate stress by putting the unit in a relaxed setting where Marines can communicate freely and get to know one another.

"It's great to see our leadership in an environment like this where there isn't as much stress," said Lance Cpl. William Youst, rifleman, 2/7. "It allows us to see them in a different perspective, not just the Marine side but a more relaxed side as well."

The event featured tug-of-war matches, an inflatable obstacle course, food, refreshments and other games

See BASH, A6

This Week in Combat Center History



Reprinted from the Observation Post
dated May 15, 1992

Vol. 34, Issue No. 20

3/7 captures local Super Squad Competition

Story and photo by Lance Cpl. D. E. Hinkle

Four squads. Four days. Only one can come in first.

Regimental Combat Team-7 held its annual rifle squad competition May 10 through May 13. The contest pitted top squads from 2nd Battalion, 7th Marine Regiment, 3rd Bn., 7th Marines, 3rd Light Armored Infantry Battalion, and 3rd Bn., 9th Marines, from Marine Corps Base Camp Pendleton, Calif., against each other in eight separate events.

Their goal was to advance to the 1st Marine Division super squad competition at MCB Camp Pendleton, June 8.

Early Sunday morning, the squads headed west to MCB Camp Pendleton for the first event: a written test on the Battle Skills Training book. Assaults through the 25 Area Combat Town followed the exam.

The Marines returned to the Combat Center for the next round of events, which took place at the Combat Conditioning Course.

The course involved a rope-climb, push-ups and a fire and maneuver course. Marines completed all events while wearing a pack and harness, and carrying a weapon.

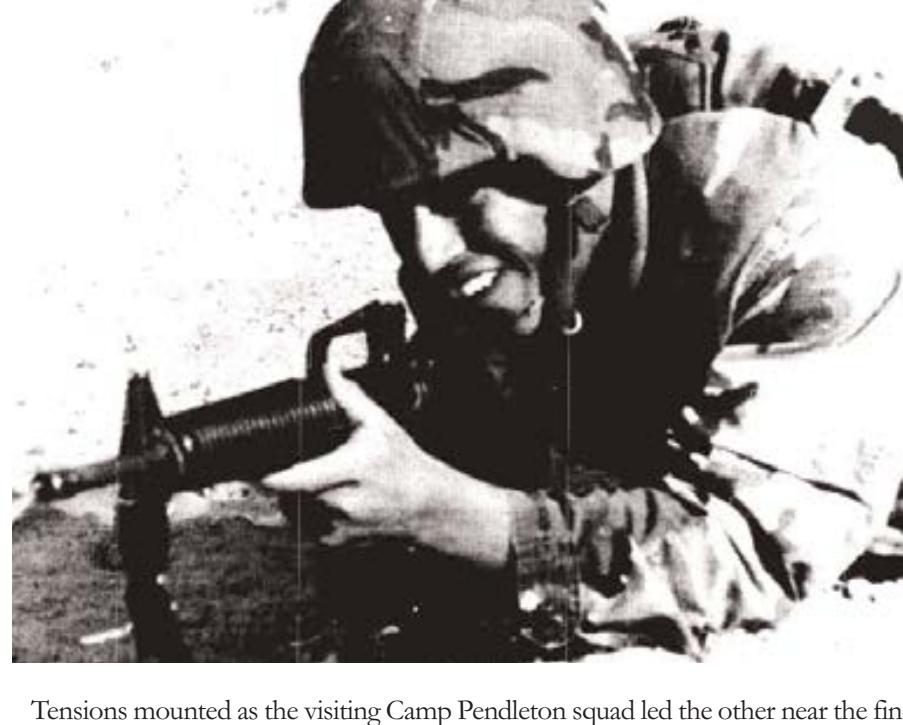
"This was to test the physical fitness and endurance of the Marines," said Capt. Don McRae, RCT-7 training officer. "These Marines were definitely in shape and ready for the competition. They were, in essence, the top squads from each of their units."

After the fire and maneuver course, the squads were ready to prove their strength in a force march out to Range 107A.

Over the next two days, the Marines got their chance to shine. They practiced live-fire offensive assaults, defensive tactics, patrolling, ambushes and land navigation, gaining points for each event.

Marines also showed their finesse in marksmanship, firing squad automatic weapons, AT-4s and M203 grenade launchers in the final round.

[Below] A Marine with 3rd Light Armored Infantry Battalion rolls around during the fire and maneuver course aboard the Combat Center, May 11, 1992.



Tensions mounted as the visiting Camp Pendleton squad led the other near the finish. But 7th Marines refused to let up, and 3/7 edged up to first place, followed by 2/7.

"It was really close," McRae said. "The standards of excellence the squads showed was incredible. They should be commended for their efforts. We all put a great deal of time and effort into the events, and they all showed a high degree of proficiency."

"SHAKER STUFF"

See answers on page A3

Across

- Relating to method
- Places to shape up
- Hit the mall
- Center of action
- Bottle part
- Whipped up
- International agreement of 1972
- Toledo's lake
- Hockey miscreants
- Jimmy's veep
- Living or dead follower
- Court order
- Zippy comeback
- Senator Gramm
- Long or Block: Abbr.
- Send to Siberia
- Baby-sitter's handful
- Cpl. or sgt.
- Champ in 5 different weight classes
- "To a ..." poem
- Gen. Robert ___
- Picture falsely
- Van ___ Waals forces
- Eggs order
- Sacred songs
- Auto grille protectors
- Source of funds in D.C.
- Cash in
- Positioned
- 440-yard-long path
- Malibu university
- "Miss Peach" cartoonist Lazarus
- Brickell or McClurg
- Producing goosebumps
- Predator's dinner
- Address components, these days
- Patronize U-Haul, say
- Bits of bravery
- Physics calculation
- Viva-voce
- Boxer Oscar ___ Hoya
- Wee workers
- Barber, at times
- Dummy Mortimer
- Carrots' go-with
- Tread the boards
- Air a message?
- Got a whiff of
- Lyricist Lorenz
- Jim Davis comics dog
- Jury member, in theory
- New and improved



Down

- Physics calculation
- Viva-voce
- Boxer Oscar ___ Hoya
- Wee workers
- Barber, at times
- Dummy Mortimer
- Carrots' go-with
- Tread the boards
- Air a message?
- Got a whiff of
- Lyricist Lorenz
- Jim Davis comics dog
- Jury member, in theory
- New and improved
- Patronize U-Haul, say
- Be out of sorts
- Pod member
- Do a groundskeeper's chore
- Radiate, as confidence
- Cereal pitchman Tony, e.g.
- Ending with pay or plug
- Nosy sort: Var.
- As a whole
- Curtain fabric
- Silver streaks
- Plantation units
- New and improved
- Not in plain view
- Org. for teachers
- Specimen for an assayer
- Cracker spread
- Beer drinker's protrusion
- Singer's asset, slangily
- Lopsided win
- "Well, did you ___?"
- Chip's cartoon mate
- Kebab holder
- "Zip-___ Doo-Dah"
- Get bushed
- Oklahoma city
- Poor marks
- Tokyo, formerly

SUDOKU 3263 D



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- Main Street Motel, 3494 Main St.

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- K Smoke Shop, 5865A Adobe Rd.

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

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- 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

Matthew FISHER

Aurora, Ill. Chaplain, Marine Corps Communication-Electronics School, 37



I was the youngest of five children in my family. I had two sisters who were very musically inclined, and one sister and a brother who were great at sports and very successful, which left me kind of floating in their shadow. For a long time in my life, I had to try to stand out from their achievements which led me to seek a different path.

My brother was a star athlete. He graduated high school as the valedictorian and went on to attend an Ivy League school and ultimately became a professor at Purdue University. Then there's me; I couldn't go anywhere without someone comparing me to one of my siblings and what they've done.

I began my journey to make my own mark by going to Marmion Military Academy, an all-boys catholic military school, where I would have achievements that would set me apart.

Alpine skiing was something we did as a family and it came very natural to me. I received several concussions in my goal to conquer mountains by skiing.

While on the slopes I learned to always wear a helmet and never try to impress women while skiing. It's how I got one of my concussions.

By my junior year in high school, some of my teachers noticed I was a fast runner and eventually the coach of the school's cross-country team heard who I was. I was encouraged by my English teacher and my father to begin running competitively.

In my experience, fulfillment in a profession doesn't necessarily mean money or a determined amount of success, but if you find joy and accomplishment in yourself.

After I got to Marmion Military Academy for high school, I played sports recreationally, but my junior year, I was encouraged to join the cross-country team. The long-distance running came naturally and I honestly never considered I'd be good at it. I guess it was a skill I never knew I had until that point.

It was a great surprise for me I suppose because it taught me a lot of lessons in teamwork. Running is individual-oriented but I would work hard and push myself to make a positive contribution to the team. How I performed directly influenced other people and that was an important lesson.

Growing up, I thought going to church was a chore but I came to realize that church wasn't the only part to being in the faith. A large part of it was helping the community and impacting the lives of people around you.

A large part of why I became a chaplain was to help the people who sacrifice so much every day to serve this country. What I realized through ministry and the volunteer work I did with Christian programs is that although people may have different walks of life many of them have similar problems.

Helping someone find a direction to go in to find meaning in what they do is a common dilemma people have in their lives. Being able to guide people in the direction they want to go and help with issues in their life is a rewarding experience.

It's important to work toward something with every step you take.

Having the end goal in mind can help get through the hard times of a life situation.

On a run, pushing through the times you want to quit will help you get to the finish line quicker. That concept can be applied to anything we do.

Running teaches many valuable lessons. There are many points in a long-distance run where you can hit a wall of exhaustion and your body wants to give up. Those are the moments you have to prepare for the most because the urge to quit always lingers.

Your career, day-to-day, or even life can present these imaginary walls that can make you want to give up or quit. Having the resilience to burst through those walls and overcome obstacles is a key part to leading a life you can be proud of.

“
It's a fundamental part of life to want to make your own path and seek meaning in what you do. It's important to remember not to get caught up in being different from others but more so, doing something you enjoy.
”

Interviewed and photographed by Cpl. Charles Santamaria May 7, 2014

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DESERT, from A1



CPL. LAUREN KURKIMILIS

Lt. Col. Matt Good, battalion commander, 3rd Light Armored Reconnaissance Battalion, sights in on Boron Prison Complex during Desert Scimitar-14, Tuesday. The unit conducted a raid of the prison during a multi-installation training exercise beginning at the Combat Center, pushing off base to the prison, and ending at Marine Corps Logistics Base Barstow, Calif. "A lot of people's efforts went into making this happen and we can't thank them enough for all of their hard work," Good said.

allowed us to work out necessary muscles like the ability to go long distances and to be self-sufficient by recovering, re-fueling and re-arming ourselves," Good said. "We also trained to be able to communicate with higher-headquarters throughout the entire iteration because we know that an asset without communication is a liability."

During Desert Scimitar, 1st Marine Division acted as the headquarters element for a forward-deployed Marine expeditionary force, which allowed it to test and refine its command and control capabilities.

"First Marine Division built this exercise for us so that we could come all the way out here to realistically train and it required a lot of coordination with the Bureau of Land Management and local law enforcement all between (Marine Corps Logistics Base Barstow), and Twentynine Palms," Good said. "A lot of people's efforts went into making this happen and we can't thank them enough for all of their hard work."

Units participating in Desert Scimitar include: Marines and sailors from 1st Marine Division Headquarters, 1st Marine Regiment, 5th Marine Regiment, 7th Marine Regiment, 11th Marine Regiment, 1st Tank Battalion, 3rd Assault Amphibian Battalion, 3rd Combat Engineer Battalion, 1st Reconnaissance Battalion, 1st Light Armored Reconnaissance Battalion, 3rd Light Armored Reconnaissance Battalion, as well as elements from the 3rd Marine Aircraft Wing and 1st Marine Logistics Group, according to a press release by 1st Marine Division Public Affairs Office.

Photos, stories and video packages are being uploaded throughout the exercise to www.dvidshub.net/unit/1md

BASH, from A1



CPL. CHARLES SANTAMARIA

A team of 2nd Battalion, 7th Marine Regiment Marines pull the rope during a tug-of-war match at the unit's barracks bash event at Del Valle Field, Saturday. The team had to keep pulling against another team until the marked part of the rope passed a point on the ground for victory.

for Marines to enjoy.

"Events like this help morale because it lets the Marines know how much this command cares about them," Durden said. "We also make sure to ask the single Marines what they want to see in these events to make sure what we're planning is what they actually want to participate in. Ultimately, we want the Marines to know that the command always wants to ensure the Marines are taken care of."

The unit participated in Desert Scimitar to encompass its next training evolution.

"It's good that this event was timed so the Marines have a break before going to the field again, but we're also ready to begin our next mission," Smith said.



CPL. CHARLES SANTAMARIA

Second Lt. Jarrod Dlugos, platoon commander, 2/7, plays with his dog, Van, during the unit's barracks bash at Del Valle Field, Saturday.



CPL RUBIN TAN
Lt. Col. Stephen Acosta, commanding officer, Headquarters and Headquarters Squadron, Marine Corps Air Station Beaufort, S.C., prepares to be dropped in a dunk tank at a unit Marine Corps Birthday Ball fundraising event at the squadron headquarters, Feb. 27, 2013.

MAKING

WE
KNOW

Funds grow tall for birthday ball

Lance Cpl. Kasey Peacock

Combat Correspondent

The illustrious Marine Corps Birthday Ball, with a history dating back to the 1920s, is one day out of the year Marines are reminded of sacrifices and accomplishments by their brothers-in-arms.

It is a celebration of epic proportion including guests of honor, music, food and drinks along with the company of friends, family and fellow Marines.

Birthday balls are unit-specific and unit-funded. The majority of the money earned to pay for the celebration is gathered from selling ball tickets. The rest is earned through unit fundraisers.

To coordinate a fundraiser on the installation for your unit, you must first get a request form from the Combat Center Staff Judge Advocate Office.

Upon receiving a request form, there are certain fields that need to be explained, including your fundraisers sponsoring organization, the purpose of the fundraiser, the type of event, location, date and time.

Once this is complete, there are five signatures you must obtain before returning the completed request form to the SJA office. Those signatures include senior staff from the Robert E. Bush Naval Hospital, Marine Corps Community Services, Provost Marshal's Office, Natural Resources and Environmental Affairs Division, and G-4 Logistics and Services.

Most commonly used on base for fundraising is the door-to-door sale of food products. Another typical event is hosting a car wash. For a complete list of both authorized and unauthorized events, search the Combat Center Order 1740.5.

For any questions concerning fundraising, call the SJA Office at (760)-830-6111.

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Red Hats

Mountain warfare instructors hone skills

Story and photos by **Cpl. Charles Santamaria**

MARINE CORPS MOUNTAIN WARFARE TRAINING CENTER BRIDGEPORT, Calif. — A team of Marines dismount from a CH-47 Chinook helicopter into a landing zone that sits at approximately 11,000 feet above sea level. The team was faced with high gusts of wind, rocky terrain, and the strain that higher altitudes can have on the body, as they progressed down the mountainside. The group overcame the natural obstacles and pushed through to the next checkpoint. Though trekking two kilometers to their first checkpoint, the team still had a long day ahead of them.

Mountain warfare instructors participated in a six-kilometer movement to Landing Zone Red Tail, located in the training area at the Marine Corps Mountain Warfare Training Center Bridgeport, Calif., as part of a 'Red Hat' refresher course, May 5. The event incorporated timed day and night movements through the terrain, mountain communication at designated checkpoints, and a survival class.

The course began April 28 and covered multiple cadres for Marines to build further upon the groups' skill sets. The classes given included survival training, an animal packer refresher, mountain medicine, day and night long-range movements, tracking, mountain communication, and other condensed courses that gave a general understanding of each skill.

"This iteration was slightly different in that the goal was to not only refresh the instructors' basic skills, but to also build upon those with specific days for each section to teach their respective course," said Capt. Dane Sagerholm, officer in charge, Mountain Warfare Training Group, MCMWTC. "When instructors have a broader range of skills, it adds to their credibility when units of different countries and sizes come to train here."

Identified by their unique red beanies, the mountain warfare instructors, known aboard the training center as 'Red Hats,' lead several courses aboard the base and regularly refine their skills through seasonal classes which refresh their knowledge on various subjects.

"As instructors, any technique or

[Top] Gunnery Sgt. Andrew Parker, instructor, Marine Corps Mountain Warfare Training Center, saws a fallen tree to be used as a socket for a bow drill during the survival class portion of the Red Hat Refresher Course, May 5. Traditionally, a rock is used as the socket for the fire-making technique but hard pieces of wood may also be used for short periods of time.

[Left] Staff Sgt. Michael Euler, instructor, MCMWTC, dismounts a CH-47 Chinook helicopter alongside a team of instructors at approximately 11,000 feet above sea level to begin a six-kilometer long-range movement to Landing Zone Red Tail as part of the Red Hat Refresher Course, May 5.

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

piece of knowledge you can add to your kit bag will help when it comes time to lead or advise a unit," Sagerholm said. "We're always students, constantly refining and learning skills."

As the seasons change, the mountain warfare instructors strive to maintain their knowledge of their environment and skills to better provide training for units or service members.

"These courses encompass the techniques instructors will use and teach during the season they are in," said Gunnery Sgt. Geraldo Uribe, staff non-commissioned officer in charge, Mountain Warfare Training Group, MCMWTC. "We sharpen our skills for the winter and summer mountain exercises and strive to give insight on the different cadres and sections in the training group on base."

Instructors provide guidance, teaching points, knowledge and experience to anyone who participates in the courses offered at MCMWTC. The skills they pass on create force multipliers throughout different units, effectively making the Marine Corps an even more refined force of readiness.

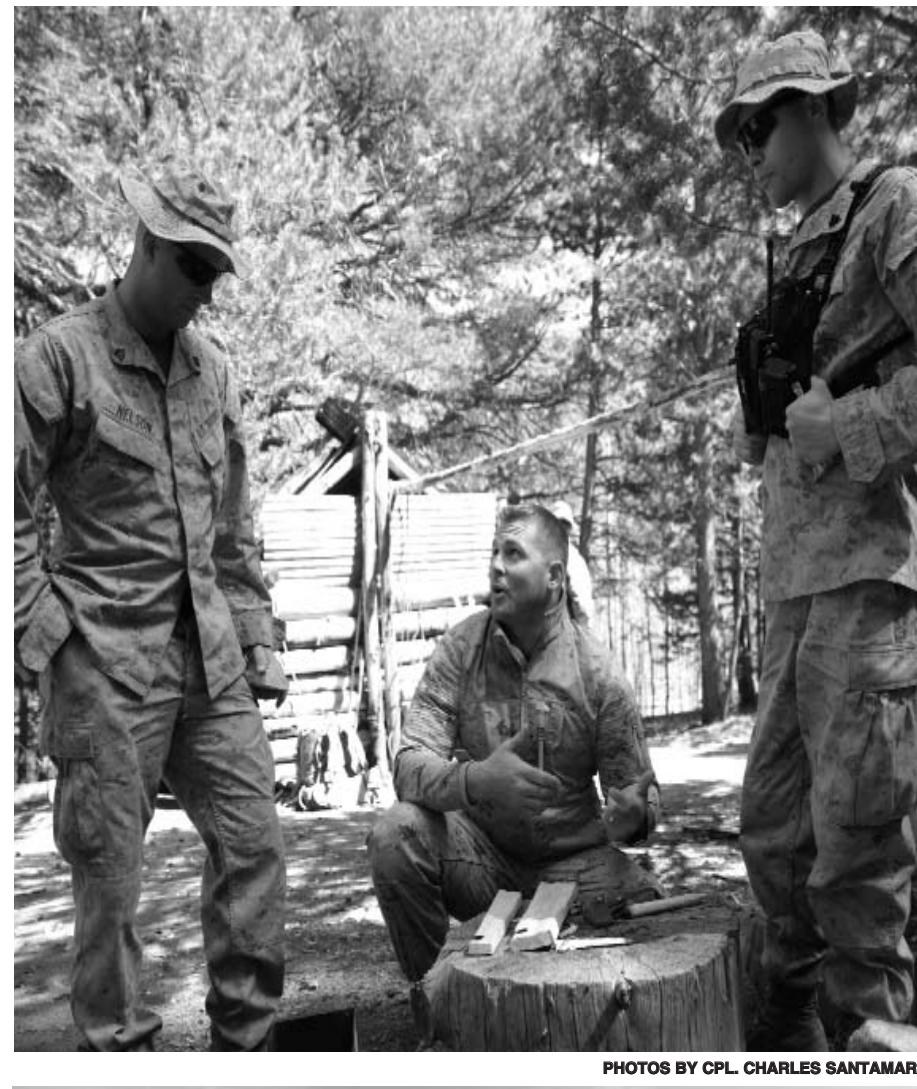
"This plays a big role in the Marine Corps," Uribe said. "It builds a Marine's physical and mental strength and it creates Marines who are ready and prepared to fight in yet another form of terrain."



[Top, right] Gunnery Sgt. Andrew Parker, instructor, MCMWTC, teaches Mountain warfare instructors how the planks of a bow drill should look during the survival class portion of the Red Hat Refresher Course, May 5.

[Above] Capt. Mike Cubillos, officer in charge, Unit Training, MCMWTC, blows on an ember he created using the bow drill method during the survival class portion of the Red Hat Refresher Course, May 5.

[Right] Staff Sgt. Levi Stuart, instructor, Special Operations Forces Horsemanship cadre, Animal Packer's Course, MCMWTC, traverses down a mountainside during the long-range movement portion of the Red Hat Refresher Course, May 5. Checkpoints throughout the movement required the team of instructors to establish communication to verify when they reached the location.



PHOTOS BY CPL. CHARLES SANTAMARIA



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WeekINPhotos

11th Marine Expeditionary Unit



GUNNERY SGT. ROME S. LAZARUS

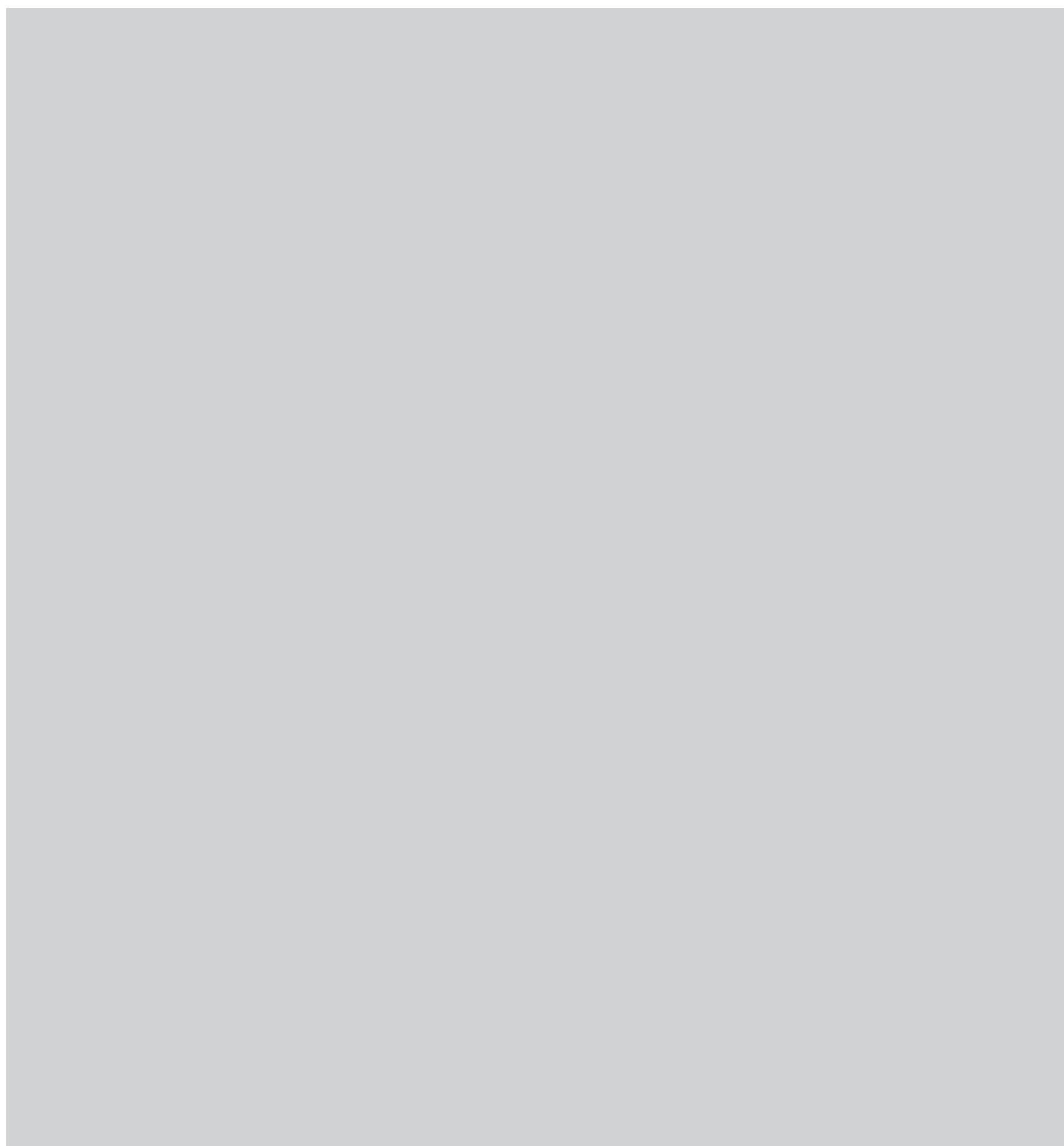
[Top, left] Sailors move toward an AH-1Z Cobra with a fire extinguisher as part of a flight deck fire drill on the USS San Diego during a Composite Training Unit Exercise off the coast of San Diego, May 8. COMPTUEX is the second at-sea training period during the 11th MEU's predeployment cycle, in which the MEU will conduct concurrent mission planning and execution integrated across all element of the Marine Air Ground Task Force while supporting Amphibious Squadron 5 in their evaluated training. **[Top, right]** Marines with Combat Cargo, USS San Diego, watch a landing craft air cushion enter the well deck of the ship during COMPTUEX off the coast of San Diego, May 8. **[Bottom, right]** A landing craft air cushion lands on Red Beach after launching from the USS Makin Island during COMPTUEX off the coast of San Diego, May 8.

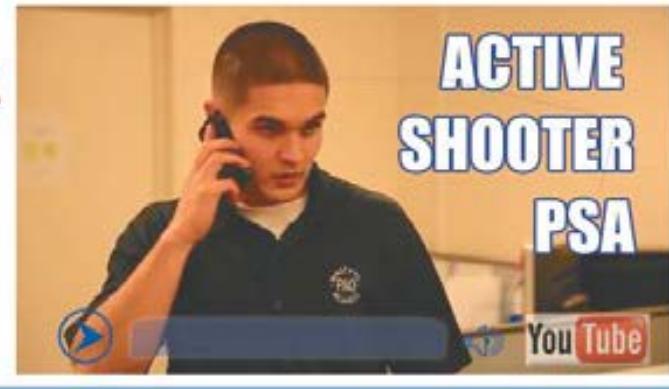


GUNNERY SGT. ROME S. LAZARUS



CPL. JONATHAN R. WALDMAN





OPERATION

Adrenaline Rush



COURTESY PHOTO

Marines with 3rd Combat Engineer Battalion ride a boat as part of a trip sponsored by Operation Adrenaline Rush in Pirate Cove Resort in Needles, Calif., Feb. 2014.

Marine Corps program offers action-packed fun

Story by Lance Cpl. Kasey Peacock

For Marines, the rigorous training cycle of a work-up, being deployed and returning home, builds bonds that can last a life time. Unfortunately, there are times when our brothers and sisters struggle with post-war efforts and combat stress can overcome them. One service member lost to suicide is too many, and as the years have passed, many initiatives and programs have been launched to caveat this epidemic.

Operation Adrenaline Rush combines combat operation stress control principles with outdoor recreational activities to aid in mitigating boredom, boost morale and deter high-risk behavior of recently deployed Marines.

Under the program, Marine units coordinate with their family readiness officers and their installation's Outdoor Recreational Facilities to set up outdoor activities that could include hiking, rock climbing, boating, skiing, snowboarding, paintballing, mountain biking and more.

All Marine units that have returned from deployment are eligible to participate in this program. They have up to 120 days after they return to schedule an event for their unit. The participation and activities are free for all Marines involved.

"The Combat Center initially wasn't funded for this program," said John Murdock, recreation manager, Combat Center Outdoor Adventures. "Marine Corps Air Station Yuma set aside extra funds for Combat Center Marines and that is how we were able to get our Marines out there. We have also worked with our budget and are preparing and planning more future trips for our Marines to take advantage of."

The program is broken down into two parts: combat and operational stress control principles and outdoor activity.

During the COSC principles portion, senior

Marines will brief the juniors on influences and resiliency, demonstration of confidence, trust, and competence among fellow Marines. This is designed to assist the Marines in acquiring the coping skills needed to manage combat experiences and stresses. The second part of the program is conducting the activity.

"I heard about this program from our family readiness officer and base sergeant major, and I knew I wanted to get my unit involved," said 1st Sgt. Rafael Vargas, Company B first sergeant, 3rd Combat Engineer Battalion. "They were able to accommodate our unit on the trip, so we split it up into five different

days, and sent our guys by company."

For the Combat Center, 3rd CEB has been the first and only unit thus far to participate. For their activity, the Marines were bussed out to the Pirate Cove Resort in Needles, Calif., where they participated in water recreation events and paintballing.

"We heard about this when we came back from deployment in October, 2013," said Cpl.

Thomas Castellano, combat engineer, 3rd CEB.

"In February of 2014, we were officially involved in the event. At first, it seemed like a normal mandatory fun day. As soon as we got out there, I realized it was much different."

For the 3rd CEB Marines, each day was split in half; half

the day in the water, and the other half paintballing.

"Not one person had anything bad to say about the event," Castellano said. "Having the activities to do with the group of people you deployed with reminds you they are still there. It reminds me of the good things about deployment, getting really close to your group of Marines."

For each portion of the activity, the Marines were given adequate instruction on proper use of equipment.

"There is always a safety portion of whichever activity the Marines are going to be involved in," Murdock said. "While the ultimate goal of the program is to promote stress relief, safety is always paramount, and we don't take any chances when it comes to the safety of our Marines."

While the Combat Center hasn't been officially funded by the program, the outdoor Adventures facility has set aside money from their budget to accommodate Combat Center Marines.

"Here at Outdoor Adventures, we do the best we can to accommodate what the Marines want to do," Murdock said. "If we can support the program with the gear that we have readily accessible, then we are more than happy to do it."

With the success of 3rd CEB's trip, more Combat Center units are looking into recreational opportunities upon returning from deployment.

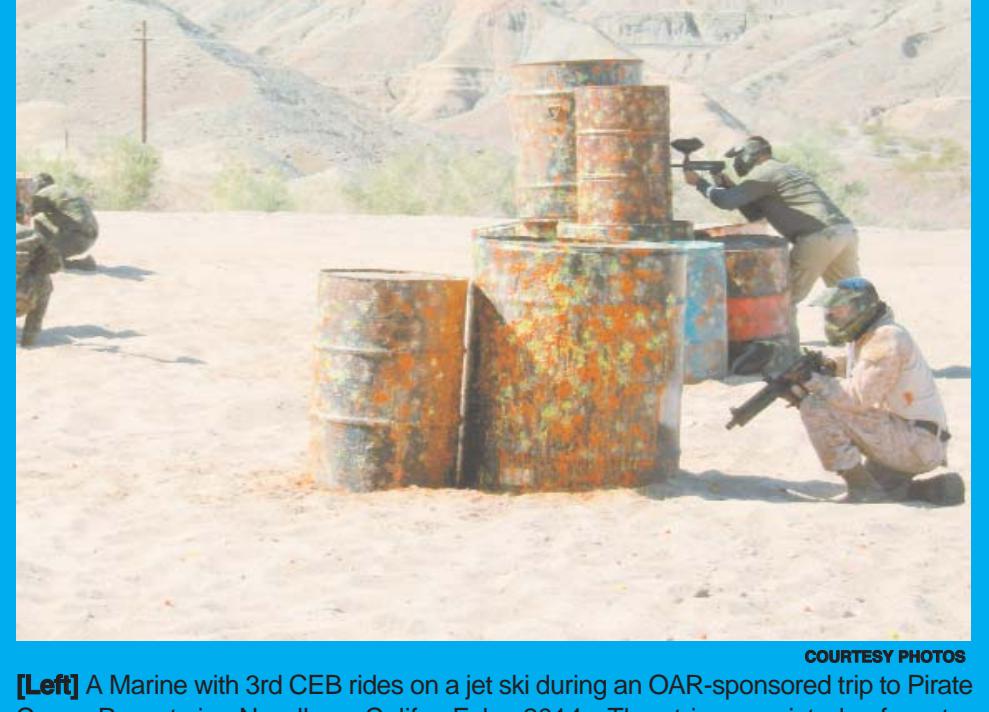
"I believe the Marines are getting everything the program intends to give and more," Vargas said. "It felt like it was the true end to our deployment. Once we got back from Afghanistan, everyone went on block leave and back to their families. This was an opportunity for all the Marines to connect again after the deployment."

With the ultimate goal of relieving post-deployment stress and deterring high-risk activities,

the program also embodies one of the oldest Marine concepts of 'taking care of our own.'

"It's one Marine looking out for another," Murdock said. "Nobody can be the same coming back from the stresses of combat. With this program, we aim to give the Marines tools to help cope with the stress."

— John Murdock



COURTESY PHOTOS

[Left] A Marine with 3rd CEB rides on a jet ski during an OAR-sponsored trip to Pirate Cove Resort in Needles, Calif., Feb. 2014. The trip consisted of water recreation and paintball for the unit, whom had returned from deployment in Oct. 2013.

[Above] Marines with 3rd CEB engage in a paintball match during an OAR sponsored trip to Pirate Cove Resort in Needles, Calif., Feb. 2014. "I believe the Marines are getting everything the program intends to give and more," said 1st Sgt. Rafael Vargas, Company B first sergeant, 3rd CEB.

Liberty Call



Combat Center Events

We Salute You Celebration

This family-friendly concert will feature artists Brett Eldridge, Craig Morgan and Shuggah Pies. Food concessions and other activities will be available on site.

When: Saturday

Where: Lance Cpl. Torrey L. Gray Field

For more information, call 830-5086

Intramural Golf Competition

Teams may have up to six players in this 72-hole Stroke Play Tournament. Entry deadline is Friday, June 6.

When: June 9 - 12, 8 a.m.

Where: Desert Winds Golf Course

For more information, call 830-4092

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, May 16

4 p.m. – Rio 2, PG

6:30 p.m. – Captain America: The Winter Soldier, PG-13

9:30 p.m. – Draft Day, PG-13

12 a.m. – Oculus, R

Saturday, May 17

NO SHOWINGS: Sounds of Freedom Concert

Sunday, May 18

12:30 p.m. – Transcendence, PG-13

2:30 p.m. – **Free Admission** The Goonies, PG

5 p.m. – **SNEAK PREVIEW** Blended, PG-13

8 p.m. – A Haunted House 2, R

Monday, May 19

6 p.m. – Captain America: The Winter Soldier, PG-13

Tuesday, May 20

5 p.m. – Heaven is for Real, PG

7:30 p.m. – The Grand Budapest Hotel, R

Wednesday, May 21

5 p.m. – Rio 2, PG

7:30 p.m. – Draft Day, PG-13

Thursday, May 22

5 p.m. – Noah, PG-13

8 p.m. – Sabotage, R

High Desert

Nunset Boulevard

The Little Sisters of Hoboken return in a brand new show.

When: 7 p.m., April 25 through May 24

Where: Theatre 29

73637 Sullivan Rd., Twentynine Palms, Calif.

For more information, call (760) 316-4151

Low Desert

Alan Jackson

Award-winning country music artist performs.

When: 8 p.m., May 16

Where: Fantasy Springs Resort Casino

84-245 Indio Springs Pkwy, Indio, Calif.

For more information, call (760) 342-5000

Maxwell

Grammy-winning artist performs.

When: 8 p.m., May 24

Where: Fantasy Springs Resort Casino

84-245 Indio Springs Pkwy, Indio, Calif.

For more information, call (760) 342-5000



Itsy Bitsy Spiders: Marvel Comics' wall crawling teen hero fights for spotlight

NEIL POND

"The Amazing Spider-Man 2"

Starring Andrew Garfield, Emma Stone & Jamie Foxx

Directed by Marc Webb

PG-13, 142 min.

The other night on TV, a show featured an urban-legend-ish conversation about someone who'd been bitten by a spider and then discovered little spiders crawling out of the bump on his neck.

I couldn't stop thinking about that as I watched this, the latest in the ongoing Hollywood franchise about a nerdy teenager, Peter Parker, turned into a wisecracking, crime-fighting superhero by the bite of a radioactive arachnid. Not only is the Spider-Man empire, with its deep comic-book roots that go back to 1962, built on the bite of a spider, but this now marks the fifth big-screen treatment of the tale, and the second notch of the new cinematic arc following the original "Spider-Man" cinema trilogy, starring Tobey Maguire, that ended in 2007.

Those little spiders — they just keep coming. The problem is, now they're in danger of getting lost in their own enormous web: massive productions with king-size star sizzle, mega special effects and north-of-\$200-million budgets. This time around, the iconic wall-crawler (Andrew Garfield, reprising his role from 2012) has to deal with multiple villains, Peter Parker's "complicated" relationship with girlfriend Gwen Stacy (Emma Stone, also returning), and troubling questions about his deceased parents.

Director Marc Webb, who also directed 2012's "Amazing Spider-Man," throws a lot into the movie's sprawling two hours and 20-plus minutes — eye-popping action, tender moments, romance,

humor, and musings on life, death, love, longing, friendship, loss, hope and the importance of fighting "for what matters to you."

It's jam-packed, stuffed with too much of everything, especially bad guys — do we really need three of them? Jamie Foxx plays an electrical engineer with serious self-esteem issues who gets turned, via a freak high-voltage mishap, into the rampaging super-villain Electro. Dane DeHaan is Harry Osborne, Parker's rich, preppy high-school friend with a mutant family gene that morphs him into the monstrous Green Goblin. And Paul Giamatti, who opens the movie as a Russian prison escapee, later appears transformed into yet another one of Spidey's archenemies from the good ol' Marvel Comic book days.

Garfield, 30, and Stone, 25, seem a tad old to be playing recently graduated high school seniors. But the two of them have great natural chemistry (they're a real-life couple, too). And their scenes together, especially when Garfield is out of the Spidey spandex and playing plain ol' Peter, provide the movie's strongest human heartbeat. Webb, whose directing resumé also includes the indie charmer "500 Days of Summer," gives Pete 'n' Gwen just as much of the story as Spider-Man, a wise move for making this movie resonate even more as a date flick.

Like most comic-based characters, superheroes never seem to age; Peter Parker/Spider-Man will always be eternally young. At least it's that way in the movies, where time can be suspended, reset and rewound, and "old" actors, like Maguire, can be replaced by newer ones, like Garfield — who's already signed on to star in the first of the two additional "Amazing Spider-Man 2" follow-ups.

Yes, those little spiders — they do just keep coming. Perhaps next time, the itsy bitsy spider won't have such a hard time fighting for his own spotlight.

1/7 departs Sangin, closes chapter in Helmand

Cpl. Joseph Scanlan
Combat Correspondent

FORWARD OPERATING BASE SABIT QADAM, Afghanistan — During the beginning years of the Marines' occupation in the Sangin District, the area was a hornet's nest of Taliban insurgents and became one of the most dangerous areas in the country.

After years of blood, sweat and tears, the Combat Center-based infantrymen of 7th Marine Regiment along with Afghan National Army soldiers rid the area of a vast number of Taliban insurgents. The Marines of Company C, 1st Battalion, 7th Marines, were the final Marines to depart Sangin when they left Forward Operating Base Sabit Qadam, May 5.

Prior to the regiment occupying the area, the local populous was being suppressed by Taliban insurgents, which resulted in only 177 votes from the area for the 2009 presidential elections. Since the Marines arrival in Sangin, they have been clearing the area of enemy fighters and training the Afghan soldiers so they could operate independently in the future.

"There were times when my platoon couldn't move more than 100 meters outside our patrol base without getting pinned down by enemy fire," said Sgt. Troy Garza, squad leader, 1/7, who also deployed to the Sangin District during 2010.

While conducting several patrols each week, Marines still devoted time to train the Afghan soldiers. Throughout the course of more than two years, the soldiers underwent hours of training and gradually became the lead element.

When Co. C deployed again during March 2014, Sangin had a completely different atmosphere compared to their 2012 deployment. During their time at FOB Sabit Qadam, the company didn't conduct a single patrol because the Afghan soldiers had taken the lead. The soldiers were the sole force patrolling the area, and they proved their ability to operate independently. The only aid the Marines provided was to assist in treating urgent casualties from ANA patrols.

"It was a bittersweet feeling for this deployment in Sangin," said Sgt. Dylan Roe, squad leader, 1/7. "As an infantryman, I want to be out patrolling, but it's great that I'm not because it means the ANA (soldiers) are doing their job."



PHOTOS BY CPL. JOSEPH SCANLAN

The success of the combined forces was proven during the latest Afghan presidential elections. More than 5,000 votes were cast from Sangin this year, compared to the 177 votes casted during 2009, and the area is much less kinetic now.

The ANA assumed full security responsibilities of FOB Sabit Qadam and began to take control of Marine posts the morning of May 5. Shortly after the turnover, the company departed FOB Sabit Qadam for the final time.

The battalion named the retrograde operation after retired Maj. Kurt Chew-Een Lee, infantry officer who served with 1/7. Lee's actions during the Korean War earned him the Navy Cross and Silver Star.

Following several days of exhausting combat during the Battle of Chosin Reservoir, Lee's platoon was tasked with spearheading a 500-man thrust against Chinese forces in an attempt to relieve Co. F, 2nd Battalion, 7th Marine Regiment. Lee's platoon marched with heavy loads through snow, up and down wooded hills, through extreme cold under the limited visibility of a blizzard and darkness. As a point man, Lee used only a compass to guide his way and led the force in single file.

C Co. drove single file in Mine-Resistant Ambush-Protected vehicles on Afghan roads as they convoyed back to Camp Leatherneck. After more than nine hours of driving, the company entered friendly lines, slated to never return to Sangin.



[Top] Capt. Alistair Howard, Company C commanding officer, 1st Battalion, 7th Marine Regiment, shakes hands with an Afghan National Army soldier during their final meeting at Forward Operating Base Sabit Qadam, Afghanistan, May 4. The company turned over security responsibility of the FOB to the ANA, May 5.

[Above] Gunnery Sgt. Michael Hutton, C Company gunnery sergeant, 1/7, ground guides the final vehicle out of FOB Sabit Qadam, Afghanistan, May 5. The infantrymen of 1/7, were the final Marines to occupy FOB Sabit Qadam and the surrounding area in Sangin District.



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