



LANCE CPL. CONNER DOWNEY

Maj. Gen. William F. Mullen III, Combat Center Commanding General speaks at the award ceremony for the Marine Corps Marksmanship Competition West at the Indoor Simulated Marksmanship Training building aboard the installation Feb. 6. The MCMCW is hosted every year by the Combat Center's Marksmanship Training Unit.

Combat Center hosts "Best in the West" competition

STORY BY LANCE CPL. PRESTON MORRIS

Marines honed their shooting skills during the Marine Corps Marksmanship Competition West 2018, which was held at the Marksmanship Training Unit aboard the Combat Center from Feb. 2 to Feb. 16.

The annual competition, known as the "Best in the West" pitted 17 teams against each other in rifle and pistol matches, some requiring shooters to tactically maneuver and make quick decisions based on the layout of the range. Regional competitions such as the MCMCW have been held since 1901 as part of the Combat-in-Arms Program.

The victor for the pistol matches was the School of Infantry West Team, who received the Holcomb for their achievements. Marine Wing Support Squadron 374's and 3rd Assault Amphibious Battalion's rifle teams received the Wharton and San Diego Bear, respectively. The teams were presented their awards in a final ceremony in which Combat Center Commanding General Maj. Gen. William F. Mullen III was the guest speaker.

"It is here we see the best shooters in the Corps engage in friendly competition," Mullen said. "We are always riflemen first, and those principles established here help make us better Marines elsewhere in the Marine Corps."



LANCE CPL. PRESTON MORRIS

A competitor marks her shots during a pistol match at the Marine Corps Marksmanship Competition West aboard the Combat Center, Feb. 6.



LANCE CPL. PRESTON MORRIS

A competitor takes part in a rifle match at the Marine Corps Marksmanship Competition West aboard the Combat Center, Feb. 6.

ITX 2-18 FINEX

PHOTOS BY PFC. TREVOR ROWETT



Marines with Golf Company, 2nd Battalion, 3rd Marine Regiment, arrive at the final exercise for Integrated Training Exercise 2-18 aboard the Combat Center, Feb. 14. The training exercise gave Marines an opportunity to practice in a challenging, realistic training environment that produces combat-ready forces capable of operating as an integrated Marine Air Ground Task Force.



Marines with Golf Company, 2nd Battalion, 3rd Marine Regiment, dig in and repel the enemy advance during the final exercise for Integrated Training Exercise 2-18 aboard the Combat Center, Feb. 15.



Marines with Golf Company, 2nd Battalion, 3rd Marine Regiment, dig in and repel the enemy advance during the final exercise for Integrated Training Exercise 2-18 aboard the Combat Center, Feb. 15.



Marines with Golf Company, 2nd Battalion, 3rd Marine Regiment, dig in and repel the enemy advance during the final exercise for Integrated Training Exercise 2-18 aboard the Combat Center, Twentynine Palms, Feb. 15.

Inside the Observation Post

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CLEOs on patrol during King of the Hammers event

See page B1

Marine Corps' Top Shot

Every week, thousands of fans cast their votes for the best photograph posted on the Corps' Facebook page. This week's top shot comes from Sgt. Conner Robbins.



Marines with Task Force Southwest fire a 120mm mortar in support of Operation Maiwand 11 at Camp Shorab, Afghanistan, Jan. 28. The Marines fired multiple illumination rounds in order to light a nearby area where the Afghan National Army 215th Corps was conducting an operation.



Reprinted from the Observation Post
Feb. 23, 1968

Engineer Company Gets Home Here

Twenty-four combat tactical vehicles and heavy engineering equipment concluded a 157-mile trek through Camp Pendleton last Friday when they rolled through the main gate to their new home at Twentynine Palms.

It marked the arrival of "D" Company, 13th Engineer

Battalion, Force Troops FMFPac, commanded by Capt. Billy L. Williams. It is the first such unit to be attached here in more than two years since "D" Company, 7th Engineer Battalion departed for Vietnam.

The company, comprised of a heavy equipment platoon,

and three combat engineer platoons has its own administration supply and motor transport personnel in addition to engineer equipment operators, equipment mechanics and engineers.

The unit's 19 different types of equipment includes: five bulldozers, 12 dump trucks,

two cranes, one mobile and one crawler, two scrapers, a grader, scoop loader, sheep-foot roller, welding equipment and chainsaws.

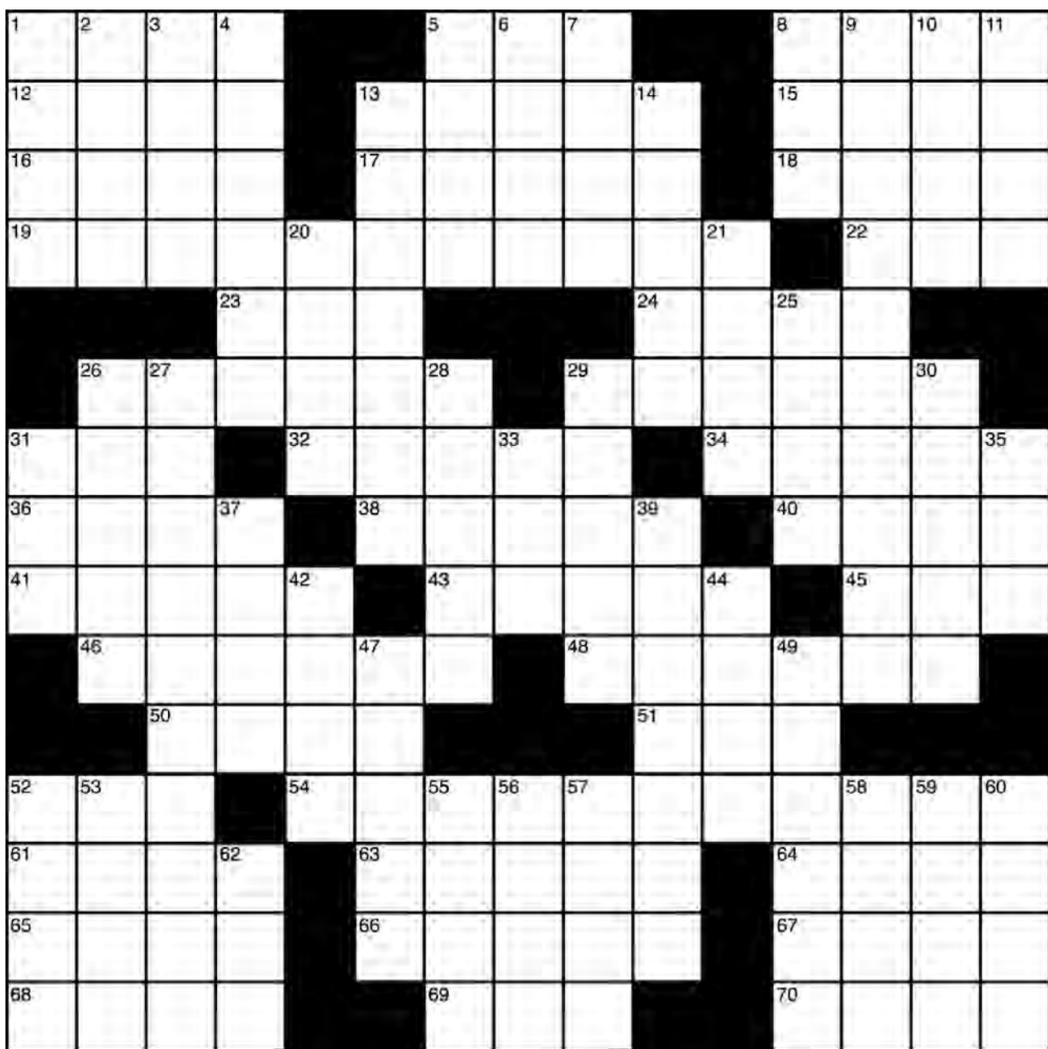
All but one member of the more than 50-man company are WestPac returnees.

The 13th Engineer Battalion was formed in August, 1966,

shortly after the reactivation of the 5th Marine Division at Camp Pendleton.

They were awarded a "Silver Shovel Award" last month during a battalion military field meet at Camp Pendleton. The award is currently displayed in the company office located in Building 1445.

CROSSWORD



- Across**
- The garment worn by a graduate.
 - Forms of identification.
 - Dark, heavy malt beverages.
 - Acronym for the Australian Library and Information Association.
 - The zodiac constellation between Pisces and Taurus.
 - Slang for flirt, sweetheart or lover.
 - To make a high, clear ringing sound.
 - Shmuel __, author of Jewish Contributions to Nineteenth-Century Arabic Theatre.
 - An insect in the third stage of metamorphosis.
 - Refers to a compound in grammar that has the same syntactic function in a sentence as one of its immediate constituents.
 - Place where athletes work out.
 - Yonder.
 - Phillip __, U.S. novelist and short story writer.
 - Sister of Adam, Fallon and Steven Carrington on the TV show, Dynasty.
 - Any orchid.
 - __ Gabor, played Lisa Douglas on the TV show, Green Acres.
 - Elzie __, creator of Popeye.
 - One of the most successful property developers in Canada's National Capital Region.
 - __ Karoli, renowned gymnastics coach.
 - To shut out from a place or condition.
 - Antonym of pretty.
 - To carry or convey something.
 - Proportional relation of two things.
 - First name of Mr. Grant on the TV show, The Mary Tyler Moore Show.

- Forces the breath violently through the nostrils, resulting in a large, harsh sound.
- Diplomatic agents.
- To bite or chew something consistently.
- Slang for empty talk.
- Nickname of President Dwight D. Eisenhower.
- Disbanded.
- A cow or ox fattened for slaughter in Scotland.
- A poisonous gas produced by the decay of radium.
- Former name of the Republic of Ireland.
- An appeal or entreaty.
- One of the pointed tines of a fork.
- Capital of Italy.
- Individual who resides in Serbia.
- To attempt.
- To take a quick photograph.

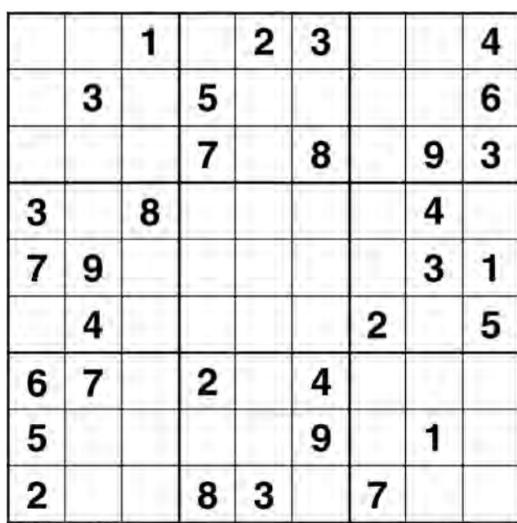
- Down**
- The habitual manner or way of doing things in Scotland.
 - Ken __, played Michael Steadman on the TV show, Thirtysomething.
 - Air moving horizontally across the earth's surface.
 - A city in southern Honshu in central Japan.
 - A durable element used to make tools, implements and machinery.
 - Loose soil.
 - A prophet.
 - Abbreviation for ampere.
 - To say in a funny, happy way.
 - James Pollard __, U.S. meteorologist.

- A fraud or hoax.
- Changed by formal procedure.
- To bake in a shallow dish or in individual dishes.
- Abbreviation for consul.
- A shrub whose leaves are used to make cocaine and other alkaloids.
- Shortened form of "through."
- Asserts as a fact in law.
- A person who feigns illness to avoid work.
- __ Falls, rapids at the bottom of Moose River, southeast of Old Forge, NY.
- To speak pompously.
- Performances by one person.
- To flow back or away.
- Acronym for the American Boxing Association.
- Acronym for New York University.
- In a short time.
- Sounding loudly.
- Abbreviation for graduate.
- The office of the President of the United States.
- Slang for a despicable person.
- Willows whose branches are used for wickerwork.
- Little devils or demons.
- Slang for money.
- A trading center.
- Scent or smell.
- Synonym for skinny.
- Palestine as the Jewish homeland and symbol of Judaism.
- __ Bombeck, U.S. writer and humorist.
- Extending far down from the top of the surface.
- A small loop on a garment used for hanging or decoration.

BIRTH ANNOUNCEMENT

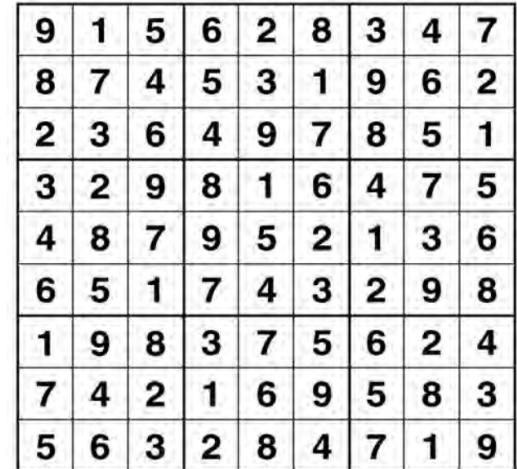
Thomas Alexander Berka
Born Feb. 5, 2018
Born to John and Alejandra Berka

SUDOKU



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Last week's answers



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- STC Smoke Shop, 6001 Adobe Road, Twentynine Palms
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- Yucca Tobacco Mart, 57602 29 Palms Highway, Yucca Valley
- NYPD Pizza, 260-262 North Palm Canyon Drive, Palm Springs
- Sam's Smoke Shop, 16520 West Main Street, Barstow
- Teazer's Bar & Grill Nightclub, 14269 Seventh Street, Victorville
- Angelo's Kars, 222 & 226 S. Coast Highway, Oceanside
- Denny's Parking Lot, 692 E Street, Chula Vista
- Burger King & McDonald's, 28th Street (parking lots), San Diego
- Club Mustang, 2200 University Avenue, San Diego
- Club San Diego, 3955 4th Avenue, San Diego
- Get It On Shoppe, San Diego
- Main Street Motel, 3494 Main Street, San Diego
- Trolley Stations, Palomar Street & San Ysidro, San Diego
- Vulcan Baths, 805 W. Cedar Street, San Diego
- Dream Crystal, 1536 Highland Avenue, National City
- Sports Auto Sales, 1111 National City Boulevard, National City

WHAT I'VE LEARNED

David PITTELKOW

Rochester, Minn. Special Operations Forces Liaison Officer, Corps Solutions

> **I was born in** Rochester, Minn. My folks are Milwaukee natives but my dad was attending medical school there at the time. Sometime after I was born we moved back to Milwaukee.

> **I have one older** brother who is two years ahead of me and twin sisters who are five years junior to me. I grew up as a suburban kid and attended public school up until the point I got accepted to college at Utah State University.

> **There was a moment during** high school when I briefly considered enlisting after I graduated. At that time, the Vietnam War was drawing down and it was a really unpopular time to be in the military. I wasn't going to let public opinion sway me but pretty much everybody above me, my brother and my parents, had all gone to college and it was just kind of what you did.

> **In college I decided** I was going to become a veterinarian. Growing up, we always had a dog or cat so I was always around animals and I liked that. My dad was a dermatologist and my brother went into medicine so perhaps there is something genetic about my choice to become a veterinarian.

> **During my first week of** college I went down to the Student Union to get lunch and when I got to the bottom of the stairs there were some ROTC tables set up. There were guys from the Army and Air Force in one area but then I looked over and there was a Marine captain all by himself standing by a table wearing dress blues. I went over to ask him how one becomes a Marine officer and from that moment the hook was set.

> **I think a lot of** guys joined the Marine Corps because they saw the uniform and that's what attracted them. I think that's what hit me.

> **Shortly after I met my** recruiter, Capt. Peterson, I changed my major and ended up studying criminal justice. I graduated four years later and became an active duty Marine in 1977.

> **I served in the Marine Corps as** an infantry officer almost seven years to the day I joined. I actually started off on the path to be an aviator but I didn't think it was really me so when I was down there I ended up requesting to drop out of flight school and go to infantry school.

> **After I successfully completed** my training my first duty assign-



ment was in Hawaii. I was there for three years. After that I became a series officer at [Marine Corps Recruit Depot Parris Island, S.C.] I worked with some great guys who I'm still in touch with today. I have fond memories of that. Another good thing about being there is that I used to go on liberty with some pals down to Jacksonville, Fl., and that's where I met my wife.

> **While I was stationed at** Parris Island I submitted an inter-service transfer to go from the Marine Corps to the Navy.

> **I'd seen Navy SEALs when** I went on deployments and I thought I might want to try it out. The SEALs were kind of mysterious in the early 80s, nobody really knew much about them. I started doing some research, there was no internet but there was a small pamphlet that I read through. It was one of those things that looked like an interesting life, full of excitement and adventure, so I just tossed in my hat and went for it.

> **I think it was** the challenge that appealed to me the most. I wasn't the greatest swimmer so I had to work hard because swimming is a big deal for Navy SEALs. At that time I was 30 years old so I was concerned about that but I passed the screening so they accepted me. I exercised about three or four times a day in preparation for my training but my biggest worry was looking back and thinking "I wish I would have tried that."

> **I was on the SEAL team** for 23 years,

making for a total of 30 years served in the military.

> **I think the Marine Corps really** taught me what I needed to know about being a man and being a leader. Not that I didn't learn stuff in the Navy too but the Marine Corps was my foundation. The things the Marine Corps teaches you about discipline, bearing, initiative and all those leadership traits that you read in the guidebook for Marines are all good. So I leaned on that because that's how I was raised as an adult in the Corps. I think that's kind of who I became and I hope that acting like a Marine as a naval officer was a good thing.

> **My dad was a** World War II Navy veteran. He fought in the Pacific but he never said anything about it. The world we were living in was Vietnam and all the unrest that came along with it. So when I first said I was joining the Marine Corps I think he was a bit taken aback. I still remember the phone call. There was a long silent pause after I told him.

> **By the time I was in** for a little while I think my parents thought, "That's why God created this guy, so he can be in the military". I used to Xerox off my fitness reports and mail them home and my dad would show his friends to say "Hey, look at my boy!" So I think he really started liking the fact that I was in the military.

> **There are similarities between** Marines and SEALs. All the guys who I went through SEAL training with were

driven, motivated and they loved what they did just like Marines. I enjoyed working with the guys who I had to rein-back versus the guys who I had to kick in the pants to get in line.

> **I like working with people who** are dedicated which is why I like my job now because I get to hang around with guys who still think and act in the same manner as the people I served with.

> **When I retired in** 2007 we wanted to do something as a family so we got a farm in Washington State. After two years of doing that I got a call from one of the guys I served with in the Navy and he told me that there was a job working with the Marines. Since I'm bilingual, meaning I was a Marine and a SEAL, he thought that I'd be a good fit.

> **It's a part-time thing.** I help integrate SEALs, Army Rangers, Green Berets and various special forces into training events like [Integrated Training Exercise] and [Large Scale Exercise].

> **When I'm not working on** training exercises I'm either working on the farm or at the fire station. I'm a station captain with the fire department in my town and we're all volunteers so we provide everything from Emergency Medical Services and structural firefighting to wildland firefighting.

> **I enjoyed the years I spent** on active duty. I've enjoyed the last 10 years doing stuff with active duty people. Everybody's different, but I think there's a lot of value in leading a life of service in some capacity.

> **If I could give advice to** someone it would be, don't live life with any regrets. If you feel compelled to do something then go for it. I would also encourage those who have served to do their best to stay in touch with the people they served with. Some of the greatest times I've had in the last 10 years were getting together with guys who I served with. It might not make sense now but 10 or 20 years from now it will.

> **My favorite thing about** being in the military has been the people. I do my current job because I like working with like-minded people who have the same thoughts and attitudes about the Marine Corps, the country and accomplishing what needs to be done. In life you can do some crummy jobs but if you're doing them with good people, it's okay.

Interviewed by Cpl. Medina Ayala-Lo and Pfc. William Chockey and photographed by Pfc. William Chockey

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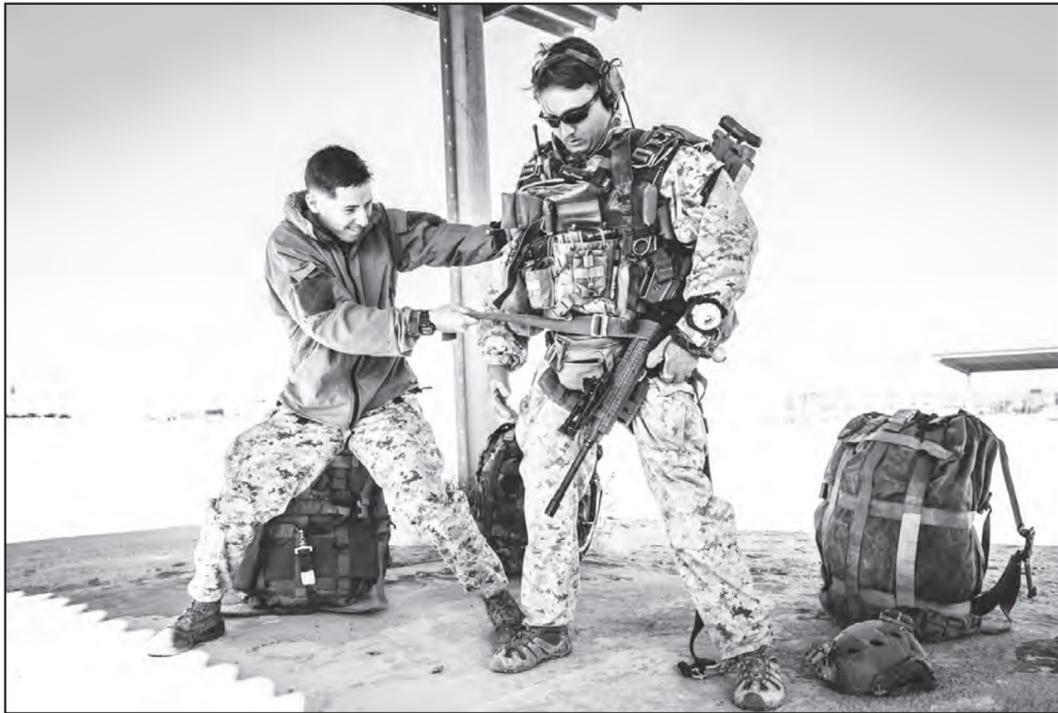
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3rd Recon gears up

Photos by Pfc. William Chockey

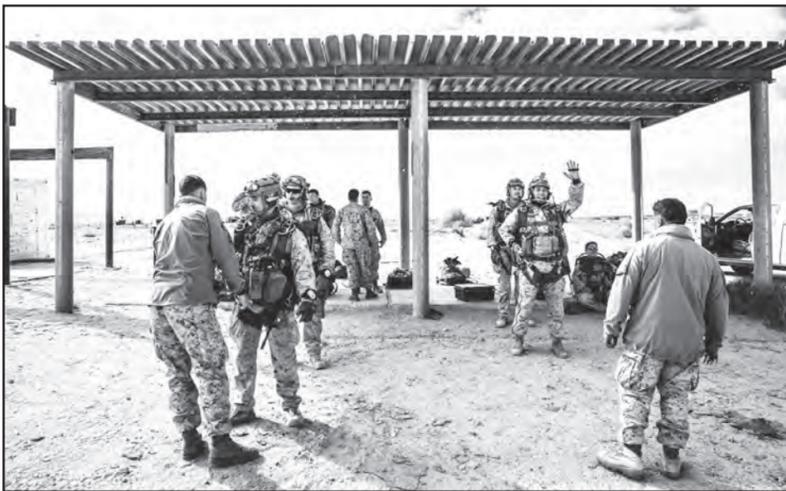


Marines with 3rd Reconnaissance Battalion, 3rd Marine Division, III Marine Expeditionary Force, prepare their gear aboard the Combat Center, Feb. 13, as part of Integrated Training Exercise 2-18. The purpose of ITX is to create a challenging, realistic training environment that produces combat-ready forces capable of operating as an integrated MAGTF.

A Marine with 3rd Reconnaissance Battalion, 3rd Marine Division, III Marine Expeditionary Force, prepares his gear aboard the Combat Center, Feb. 13, as part of Integrated Training Exercise 2-18.



A Bell AH-1Z Viper takes off at the Air Combat Element landing strip aboard the Combat Center, Feb. 13.



Marines with 3rd Reconnaissance Battalion, 3rd Marine Division, III Marine Expeditionary Force prepare their gear aboard the Combat Center, Feb. 13 as part of Integrated Training Exercise 2-18.



Marines with 3rd Reconnaissance Battalion, 3rd Marine Division, III Marine Expeditionary Force wait for a C-130 Aircraft at the Air Combat Element landing strip aboard the Combat Center, Feb. 13.

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A Marine with 3rd Reconnaissance Battalion, 3rd Marine Division, III Marine Expeditionary Force prepares his gear aboard the Combat Center, Feb. 13, as part of Integrated Training Exercise 2-18.



Marines with 3rd Reconnaissance Battalion, 3rd Marine Division, III Marine Expeditionary Force prepare their gear aboard the Combat Center, Feb. 13, as part of Integrated Training Exercise 2-18.

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Conservation Law Enforcement Officers set up their base of operations near Emerson Lake training area aboard the Combat Center during King of the Hammers off-road racing and rock-crawling event, Feb. 7. CLEOs work to protect and preserve the base's many natural and cultural resources.

CLEOs: here to protect our natural, cultural resources

STORY AND PHOTOS
 BY CPL. DAVE FLORES

The Combat Center's vast expanse of desert, more than 1,100 square miles, is home to many forms of wildlife and hidden archeological wonders. Conservation Law Enforcement Officers, or CLEOs, work to protect these unique and irreplaceable resources aboard the installation, helping the base preserve its training mission.

Each February, CLEOs play an integral role in protecting that mission during the annual King of the Hammers event in Johnson Valley, Calif. KOH is the largest off-road racing and rock-crawling event in North America and brings hundreds of race teams and thousands of spectators to the dry lake beds, sand dunes and canyons west of ranges where combined-arms, live-fire training is conducted daily.

"Areas of high-density cultural and natural resources happen to fall near King of the Hammers due to the recent base expansion," said Russel Elswick, chief conser-

vation law enforcement officer, Environmental Affairs. "We get a lot of people who do and don't know the new boundaries of the base, so we try to move them out of those areas and inform them of the base boundaries."

CLEOs spend the week patrolling training areas to keep spectators and racers off the base and away from danger.

"We're here to do the law enforcement aspect of environmental affairs," Elswick said. "Our primary goal is to protect the large cultural and natural sites on the base. Our secondary is to protect any of the smaller ones that the base might have, as well to protect and serve the installation personnel and outside community."

In addition to patrols during events like King of the Hammers, Elswick and his team of four officers work year-round to protect the Combat Center's cultural and natural resources. They average more than 300 contacts a year with civilians coming onto the installation, resulting in everything from small citations to felony arrests.



Jovan Roberts, conservation law enforcement officer, Environmental Affairs, refuels an off-road utility vehicle before embarking on a patrol aboard the Combat Center during the King of the Hammers off-road racing and rock-crawling event, Feb. 7.



Jovan Roberts, conservation law enforcement officer, Environmental Affairs, patrols the Combat Center's western boundary during the King of the Hammers off-road racing and rock-crawling event, Feb. 7.



Conservation Law Enforcement Officers discuss patrol routes to prevent incursions onto the Combat Center during the King of the Hammers off-road racing and rock-crawling event, Feb. 7.

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Friday — Feb. 23

5:00 p.m. — The Commuter, PG—13

7:30 p.m. — Maze Runner: The Death Cure, PG—13

10:30 p.m. — Den of Thieves, R

Saturday — Feb. 24

12:00 p.m. — Paddington 2, PG

2:30 p.m. — Insidious: The Last Key, PG—13

5:00 p.m. — The Post, PG—13

7:30 p.m. — The Commuter, PG—13

10:00 p.m. — 12 Strong, R

Sunday — Feb. 25

12:00 p.m. — Maze Runner: The Death Cure, PG—13

3:00 p.m. — Den of Thieves, R

6:00 p.m. — Death Wish (Advance Screening), R

Monday — Feb. 26

6:30 p.m. — 12 Strong, R

Tuesday — Feb. 27

6:30 p.m. — Den of Thieves, R

Wednesday — Feb. 28

6:30 p.m. — Maze Runner: The Death Cure, PG—13

Thursday — March 1

5:00 p.m. — Insidious: The Last Key (Last Showing), PG—13

7:10 p.m. — Downsizing (Last Showing), R

Friday — March 2

5:00 p.m. — Maze Runner: The Death Cure, PG—13

8:00 p.m. — The Shape of Water, R

11:00 p.m. — Winchester: The House that Ghosts Built, PG—13

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<p style="text-align: center;">Town of Yucca Valley Job Announcement</p> <p style="text-align: center;">Part-Time, Temporary Skilled Maintenance Worker I Public Works Department</p> <p>Positions: Two Part-time positions</p> <p>Salary Range: \$16.15 to \$23.39 hourly (Skilled Maintenance Worker I)</p> <p>Days/Hours: One schedule: 6:00a.m. – 3:30p.m, Monday through Wednesday. One schedule: 6:00am-3:30pm Thursday, 6:00am-2:30pm Friday, 6:00am-3:30pm Saturday</p> <p>Benefitted: No</p> <p>Closing Date: Thursday, March 1, 2018 at 5:00 P.M.</p> <p>Under general supervision, this position will perform heavy physical work in the maintenance and repair of the Town parks and facilities; and perform all other work as assigned. Knowledge of the following applicable areas: the operation and maintenance of tools and equipment used in the workplace; safety precautions and procedures; traffic laws, ordinances, rules and regulations related to truck and heavy equipment operations. 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★ ★ ★ ★ ★ Around the Corps ★ ★ ★ ★ ★



A role player participating in the rescue of Japanese nationals overseas simulating a casualty as Japanese embassy employees assist at the Sattahip district in the Chon Buri province, Kingdom of Thailand, Feb. 17.



Senior leadership from various nations' militaries participating in Cobra Gold 18 pose for a photo during the Noncombatant Evacuation Operations and Rescue of Japanese Nationals Overseas Exercise, Feb. 17. This training provided a venue for both United States and partner nations to advance interoperability and increase partner capacity in planning and executing complex and realistic multinational force and combined task force operations. Exercise Cobra Gold 2018 is an annual exercise conducted in the Kingdom of Thailand held from Feb. 13-23 with seven full participating nations.

Cobra Gold 18: Japan, Malaysia, U.S. and Thailand practice Noncombatant Evacuations and Rescue of Japanese Nationals Overseas Exercise

STORY AND PHOTOS BY
PETTY OFFICER 3RD CLASS
IAN KINKEAD

The NEO and RJNO were conducted as part of Exercise Cobra Gold 18. The Thai-U.S. co-sponsored exercise increases cooperation, interoperability and collaboration among partner nations in order to achieve effective solutions to common challenges.

Governments around the world initiate the NEO when their citizens are in danger in a host foreign nation, typically as a result of a deteriorating security situation or a natural disaster. In 1991, multiple nations evacuated the Philippines due to the eruption of Mount Pinatubo.

"This is one mission all of us can get behind," said 1st Lt. Michael Simpson a native of Lodi, N.J. "The ability to safely evacuate our personnel out of a country and get them back to a safe haven is a mission that all nations agree upon."

The NEO/RJNO practiced at Cobra Gold 18 simulated the

processing of evacuees. The evacuees played roles that military personnel then had to respond to. Some of the role players were told to forget important documents, others were assigned injuries or medical conditions and some were given VIP status.

The evacuees, role players from the participating countries, moved in stages through the NEO/RJNO. When they first arrived at the airport via ground transportation, they had their passports checked, and they received a quick security pat down before moving to the reception area. At the reception area, the evacuees were separated by nationality and had to show proper documentation before being escorted inside the hangar.

Once inside, they would go through their countries' screening and security process as well as fill out paperwork that would help keep track of them during the evacuation process.

Following the individual country screening and administration process, the role players



Role players in a practice noncombatant evacuation operation arrive to Utapao International Airport, Feb. 17. This training provided a venue for both United States and partner nations to advance interoperability and increase partner capacity in planning and executing complex and realistic multinational force and combined task force operations.

were escorted to an area where they waited to evacuate from the airport.

The RJNO and NEO concluded with the boarding of evacuees onto their country's respected C-130 aircraft. They all then took off for a short flight before landing at the same airport.

"It was a phenomenal oppor-

tunity to work alongside our partner nations," Simpson said. "I certainly learned a lot. There are difficulties with working with our partner nations, so it's good we can all get on the same page."

By working together in events like the RJNO and NEO at Cobra Gold 18, partner nations

are addressing shared goals and security commitments in the Indo-Pacific region while ensuring effective responses to regional crises.

Exercise Cobra Gold 2018 is an annual exercise conducted in the Kingdom of Thailand held from February 13-23 with seven full participating nations.

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