

The Eagle & The Crescent

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Transition to Self-Reliance

Aug. 5, 2005

Prowling Banshees arrive in Al Asad



Sgt. Juan Vara

Marines from Marine Tactical Electronic Warfare Squadron 1, 2nd Marine Aircraft Wing (FWD), conduct daily and turnaround inspections on an EA-6B Prowler July 28. The 'Banshees' of VMAQ-1 arrived here recently to support the mission of Multi-National Forces Iraq by using the cutting edge technology in their aircraft.

Sgt. Juan Vara

2nd Marine Aircraft Wing (FWD)

AL ASAD, Iraq -- The "Banshees" of Marine Tactical Electronic Warfare Squadron 1 arrived here recently to help protect service members on the battlefield with the cutting edge technology in their EA-6B Prowlers.

They replace the "Seahawks" of VMAQ-4, who returned to Marine Corps Air Station Cherry Point, N.C., after a six month deployment here in support of Operation Iraqi Freedom.

"We're prepared to meet the mission requirements that are sent to us in support of

Operation Iraqi Freedom," said Sgt. Maj. George Espinosa, VMAQ-1 sergeant major and native of St. Croix, U.S. Virgin Islands. "Our Marines work pretty hard and are very motivated."

According to Espinosa, a large number of Marines in the unit are on their first deployment to this region and are excited to participate in real-world operations.

"Everywhere we've gone we've been training for this," said Cpl. Jaa E. Tucker, electronic countermeasures technician assigned to the squadron's avionics section. "We're in the fight now and all that training has helped us out."

Tucker, from Colquitt, Ga., said last

year the unit spent seven months at Marine Corps Air Station, Iwakuni, Japan, supporting the Unit Deployment Program. Along with maintaining combat readiness for any contingencies in the western Pacific, the squadron participated in several allied and joint force exercises.

Earlier this year they participated in the Weapons and Tactics Instructors Course and Exercise Desert Talon at MCAS Yuma, Ariz.

"Desert Talon gave us an opportunity to get used to the desert and particularly the heat," said 1st Lt. Russell A. Strange, electronic countermeasures officer and Cresson, Pa., native. "We have to learn how to deal with it physically and we also have to learn how the jets deal with it. Our maintenance Marines did a great job helping us get our jets here and I have to give kudos to them for working on our jets in these conditions."

While the triple-digit temperatures of Al Anbar province may not offer the most welcoming environment, the Marines' commitment to help the squadron accomplish its mission keeps them pushing through.

"The Marines have been adapting very well to the conditions and we're working every day to improve our headquarters and our maintenance sections to make our Marines comfortable and keep them focused on their mission," said Espinosa. "We had a good turnover with [VMAQ-4] and they built a good foundation for us to start off with."

The unit is ready to support.

"Just like any other Marine aviation unit here we're here for the guys on the ground," said Strange.

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FRIDAY	SATURDAY	SUNDAY	MONDAY
			
Low: 88F High: 110F	Low: 88F High: 106F	Low: 88F High: 106F	Low: 84F High: 104F
Sunrise 0622D Sunset 2003D	Sunrise 0623D Sunset 2002D	Sunrise 0624D Sunset 2001D	Sunrise 0625D Sunset 2000D
ILLUM 0%	ILLUM 1%	ILLUM 5%	ILLUM 10%

By Gunnery Sgt. Steven L. Saxton

Camp Fallujah

MWR events

Hip Hop Night: Come out to the recreation center and dance with your friends tonight from 9:30 p.m. to 1 a.m.

5K Fun Run: Come out to the recreation center and join us for a 5K Fun Run at 7:30 a.m. tomorrow.

Movie Night: Every day at 3 and 7 p.m. a movie will be played in the recreation center back room.

For more information, contact the MWR supervisor: crystal.nadeau@halliburton.com

A message to The Eagle & The Crescent readers

The Eagle & The Crescent is not just an "internal information" newsletter but a weekly compendium of stories and photos featuring the servicemen and women of Multi-National Force – West/II Marine Expeditionary Force (Forward). These stories and photos give readers a glimpse into the personal and professional lives of Marines, Soldiers, Sailors and Airmen serving far from home in a challenging and often hostile environment. The stories you read here are the ones that go untold, or underreported, in the mainstream media. Regardless of one's opinion about Iraq today or the decision to send U.S. military forces to Iraq, there are sacrifices being made every day by the men and women whose stories appear on these pages, and their fellow service members. I may be a little biased but I believe these brave men and women deserve your support.

THANK YOU -- to those readers who have helped spread the reach of TE&TC by forwarding copies to family and friends; to those readers who have taken the time to send us feedback or notes of support and encouragement; and not least, to those Marines, Soldiers, Sailors and Airmen whose stories on the pages of our newsletter demonstrate to the world your commitment, dedication and sacrifice.

Lt. Col. Dave Lapan

Director, II MEF (FWD) Public Affairs
cepaowo@cemnf-wiraq.usmc.mil

II Marine Expeditionary Force (FWD)

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Cpl. Ruben D. Maestre

Lance Cpl. Evan M. Eagan

Lance Cpl. Joshua C. Cox

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Chaplain's Corner:

Is waiting hard for you?

Chaplain (Lt.) James W. Asher
Combat Logistics Battalion 8



Waiting is one of the hardest things to do, isn't it? Waiting entails patience, and persistency. A person can be patient by staying in one place until something happens. Or, he can be patient by persistently working on something until it gets done. Generally, we like taking the quickest and easiest route.

A man had an idea for removing a tree stump from the yard of a friend. He decided to use some dynamite he had stored in his house. It did the trick. The explosion turned the stump into an airborne missile that traveled 163 feet down-range before crashing through a neighbor's roof. The stump opened a 3-foot hole in the roof, split the rafters, and pushed through the ceiling of the dining room.

The man in the story apparently wanted to get things done the quickest and easiest way. But look at the damage he caused. There are times when we all get a little hasty in getting things done, or we are eager to get some place. In so doing we might create problems for ourselves, and for others. It is important to see that haste makes waste, and patience is a virtue.

It is more important we do things properly than it is for us to do them quickly. It also is imperative to see by pa-

tiently doing quality work we bring less stress on ourselves, and on others around us. Hastiness tends to produce less than quality work.

Something to keep in mind is that waiting does not imply that a person sits around doing nothing. Those who are patient are those who have hope, and maintain themselves. In fact, that is exactly what is implied by the word wait in scripture. Isaiah 40:30-31 states, "Even the youths shall faint and be weary, and the young men shall utterly fall. But those who wait on the Lord shall renew their strength; they shall mount up with wings like eagles, they shall run and not be weary, they shall walk and not faint." To be running and not grow weary, and walking and not fainting is certainly not a picture of complacency, or laziness. It is a picture of someone who is on the move, getting things done. It paints a picture of someone who knows that as long as I do what I am suppose to do, in the way it should be done, then everything will fall into place at the right time. This is the person who understands that God will work at the right time, in the right way. That is why the word is also translated as hope.

To wait is hard if you view it as inactivity. But when you understand it means you stay on top of things, and that you are prepared, then you see that waiting requires lots of work. There is an old saying "Idle hands are the devil's tools". Well, waiting for the Lord will keep those hands from being idle. It will ensure that your focus is on God, and that you are doing what you should be doing in order to be prepared to give an account of yourself to him. So remember, "Wait for the Lord; be strong and take heart and wait for the Lord." (Psalm 27:14)

Marines continue studies in combat

Lance Cpl. Joshua C. Cox

II Marine Expeditionary Force (FWD)

CAMP FALLUJAH, Iraq -- "Refer to your text on page 316," isn't a phrase one would expect to hear in a combat zone, but for several Marines and Sailors deployed in support of operations here, it is a very common expression.

Service members have the opportunity to obtain criminal justice-related college credits here through a program offered by the 2nd Military Police Battalion, II Marine Expeditionary Force (FWD), called the 2nd MP Bn. Combat College Education Program.

"The program was initiated through the approval of the battalion commander," said Chief Warrant Officer John I. Hawthorne III, corrections officer, 2nd MP Bn., II MEF (FWD), who instructs the courses offered here.

Hawthorne, who also teaches college curriculum stateside, suggested bringing the same opportunity to deployed Marines to enhance their proficiency in corrections.

"It's not online, they talk to their instructor every day," said Hawthorne. "For an

hour and a half every day they have personal contact [through] classroom instruction from an instructor."

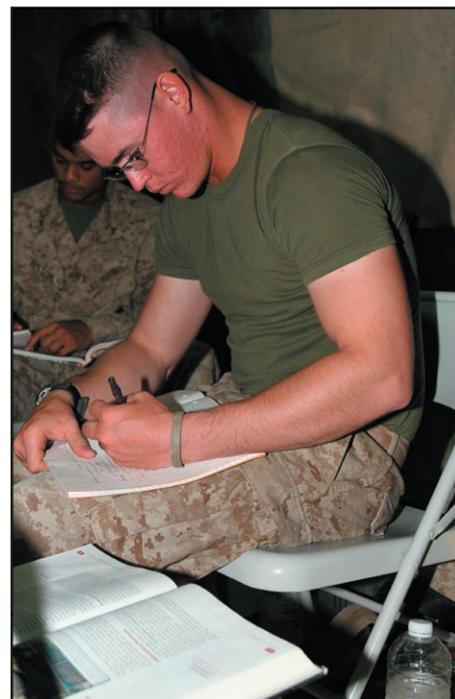
Most college students have the opportunity to enjoy safe, scenic campuses with comfy classrooms and accessibility to an abundance of educational tools when pursuing his/her education.

Deployed service members do not have the same luxuries available to average college students. In fact, the evening classes are held six days per week in a small 100 square foot tent within the 2nd MP Bn. compound. Even though the facilities are not the best, it doesn't hinder service members from completing college coursework.

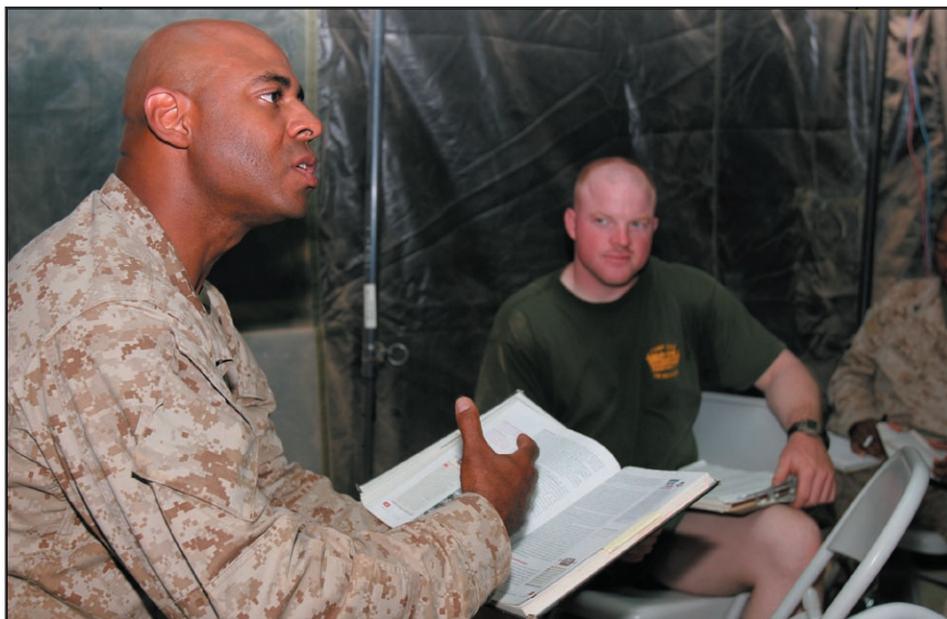
The program is comprised of roughly 25 Marines and Sailors, who balance their military duties and college commitment, said Hawthorne. Because work and duty schedules vary among units, most of the students are from the 2nd MP Bn., II MEF (FWD), he said.

Hawthorne said the classes are designed to launch service members' education goals off the ground.

"Taking this is definitely going to get me on the right foot with college, and help me



Lance Cpl. Corey G. Simpson, 20, generator mechanic, Engineer Section, II Marine Expeditionary Force, Headquarters Group, II MEF (FWD), and native of Melissa, Texas, takes notes during a class here July 20.



Photos by Lance Cpl. Joshua C. Cox

Chief Warrant Officer John I. Hawthorne III, corrections officer, 2nd Military Police Battalion, II Marine Expeditionary Force (FWD), instructs an evening class here July 20, 2005. The classes began after Hawthorne suggested the courses be offered to deployed Marines and Sailors.

get a foot in the door when I get back home in college," said Lance Cpl. Corey G. Simpson, generator mechanic, Engineer Section, II Marine Expeditionary Force, Headquarters Group, II MEF (FWD).

Simpson, a reservist, is taking the classes in hopes to advance his civilian career in corrections as a jailer.

The courses not only serve as a learning tool, but also as an opportunity for the students to relax.

"It takes our mind off everything else," said Lance Cpl. Kenton G. Alston, administrative clerk, S-1, 2nd MP Bn., II MEF (FWD).

The classes have proven to be a success, and have benefited the students in many ways.

"I'm pleasantly surprised at how it has turned out," said Lt. Col. Richard A. Anderson, commanding officer, 2nd MP Bn., II MEF (FWD). "I think it's outstanding."

Idealist, Marine called to serve in Iraq

Cpl. Ruben D. Maestre

II Marine Expeditionary Force (FWD)

CAMP FALLUJAH, Iraq -- He is an all-American young man from upstate New York. Tall and broad-shouldered, Lance Cpl. Scott J. Dempsey swam and played lacrosse during his high school years. He participated in student government and was a member of the National Honor Society.

Yet unlike many of his peers who went off to college after high school, the native of Amherst, N.Y., bucked the trend and joined the Marine Corps.

"I came from a town where a lot of people didn't join the military," said the administrative clerk. "Joining the Marine Corps was going against the norm."

The 2001 Amherst High School graduate wanted to do more with his life and his idealism yearned for a sense of purpose and accomplishment.

"I looked at myself and asked, 'have I ever truly lived in my life?'" said the Marine currently assigned to 5th Civil Affairs Group, 2nd Marine Division.

Dempsey joined the Marine Corps Reserves and went to boot camp May 2002. It was there he was challenged to his mental and physical limits, but gained a new found sense of pride and a greater self-confidence.

"It was certainly a challenge and [boot camp] was something outside the environment I was used to," he said. "The Marine Corps taught me to be proud of myself and to take advantage of the opportunities that I had in life."

Dempsey reported for drill with 4th Combat Engineer Battalion, 4th Marine Division, one weekend every month and under a special program, he attended his Military Occupational Specialty school and Marine Combat Training during the summer months when he was not in class at University of Maryland in College Park, Md.

Then in January, shortly after he graduated from college, Dempsey was activated for deployment to Iraq.

"I saw what was happening over here, I saw that some Marines were here their second and third time and I thought to myself that I didn't want to leave the Marine Corps three years from now and not have gone [to Iraq]," said Dempsey, who volunteered for the mission. "I looked at myself -- no wife, no kids and I said to myself, it's time for me to step up to the plate."

Arriving here in March, Dempsey and other American service members continue to assist in security, reconstruction efforts and small scale interaction with Iraqis in Al Anbar province.

"We have a challenge in front of us; a challenge to rebuild a country that's seen so much warfare and repression under Saddam's re-

gime," said Dempsey. "A lot of these people have little hope. Our job is as much psychological as it is the physical rebuilding of roads; it's a sense of restoring hope to these people and letting them know they can overcome the challenges and become a thriving country."

Personally and professionally, the obstacles Dempsey faces as a Marine may seem insurmountable, but he carries an old-fashioned American idealism to overcome any challenge to get the job done.

"We are making small strides," said Dempsey. "It's been an incredible opportunity I've had to actually see a difference we've made."

The lessons learned in Marine boot camp apply to him as well.

"You take the challenges and you realize that they can be overcome," said Dempsey. "You have the confidence that you can do anything. You can break it down and see it doesn't look intimidating."

Other Marines have taken note of his positive and idealistic demeanor.

"He's very smart, tactful and professional. Whenever you give him something to do, he gets it done," said Cpl. Phillip W. Turner, 26, an administrative and civil affairs non-commissioned officer assigned to 5th CAG. "He has a great attitude."

Having three sisters but no brother, Dempsey relishes the bonds he has with his fellow Marines and how every one of them can rely on each other.

"Camaraderie," he said. "I've never had any brothers so that's one intangible quality that I treasure from the Marines."



Cpl. Ruben D. Maestre

Lance Cpl. Scott J. Dempsey, of Amherst, N.Y., assigned with 5th Civil Affairs Group, 2nd Marine Division, holds a young Iraqi boy during a goodwill mission here recently.

CLB-8 wreckers recover it all

Cpl. John E. Lawson Jr.

2nd Force Service Support Group (FWD)

CAMP FALLUJAH, Iraq -- Humvees, Logistics Vehicle Systems and 7-ton trucks are among the vast arsenal of vehicles used by U.S. troops in Operation Iraqi Freedom. So are M1A1 Abrams tanks, Light Armored Vehicles, Amphibious Assault Vehicles and many others.

Fortunately for everyone who operates or rides in these systems, the Marines of Combat Logistics Battalion 8, 2nd Force Service Support Group (FWD), have another type of vehicle in their arsenal: wrecker / recovery vehicles.

The 15-Marine section operates five motor transport recovery vehicles, one M88 tank recovery vehicle and one R7 AAV recovery vehicle on recovery missions and as attachments with every CLB-8 convoy departing Camp Fallujah. The Marines are on-call 24 hours a day, seven days a week for recovery missions.

"The whole team is on standby," said Staff Sgt. Chad R. Mueidner, recovery chief and Centerville, Penn., native. "We are usually responding and ready-to-roll within 10 minutes of [a recovery request]."

The recovery team has stayed busy, logging more than 17,000 miles since deploying to Iraq in February.

The wreckers support more than just the needs of CLB-8; they support any within their area of operations, including other Coalition Forces and Iraqi Security Forces. They also have moved numerous civilian vehicles and lent their assistance to the engineers and projects short on heavy equipment.

Sergeant David A. Taylor, wrecker noncommissioned officer-in-charge and Port Allegany, Penn., native, said it is not uncommon for the recovery section to move broken-down, abandoned civil-

ian vehicles from the roadways in the Fallujah area.

This initially provided a challenge for the Marines; their training taught them how to recover military vehicles, not civilian vehicles. But, in true Marine fashion, the wreckers quickly learned to adapt and overcome.

"Out here we recover cars, tractor trailers; we do everything, heavy equipment, motor [transportation], civilian vehicles, AAVs, tanks," Taylor said. "We do it all."

Civilian vehicles are turned over to the appropriate Iraqi Highway Patrol unit once removed from the roadways.

Removing broken down vehicles from the roadway is important because they have become an insurgent favorite as a hiding place for Improvised Explosive Devices, said Taylor.

The recoveries do not come without challenges though, said Sgt. Clifford A. Golembieski, R7 crew chief and Silver Creek, N.Y., native.

"A lot of [the challenges] come from where the vehicles are located. There are a lot of tight or rough areas out here," he said.

Most of the non-IED or mine-related recoveries originate when the units are operating on terrain or in conditions where their vehicles are not made to go.

"You can't blame the units though," said Golembieski. "They have a mission to do."

Taylor pointed out another challenge of the high-paced mission: sleep deprivation.

"Every recovery mission we go on, we have no idea how long we'll be out there," he said, also emphasizing the ever-ready mindset of the section. "Sometime we get to sleep and 20 minutes later there is a knock on the door and a mission to accomplish. We're always on the go."

The mission would not be the success it is without the positive attitude possessed by each Marine, said Mueidner, adding the Marines often argue on who "gets to go" on a mission, not who "has to go."

"They're all happy to go out," he said. "They'd rather be out on the road than sitting around here."



Cpl. John E. Lawson Jr.

A truck from the wrecker section, Combat Logistics Battalion 8, 2nd Force Service Support Group (FWD), stages with a convoy preparing to depart Camp Fallujah. The Marines of the vehicle recovery section attach to convoys to provide wrecker support and support to all Coalition and Iraqi Security Forces operating within their area of operations.



**There are no
admin movements.**

**All movements are
Combat Ops.**



0072

IEDs KILL

Caught in the Spotlight

CAMP FALLUJAH, Iraq -- Only knowing the Vietnamese language, with his father and siblings by his side, an anxious 9-year-old boy came to the United States in search of a better life not knowing he would one day become a Marine.

Sergeant Trung M. Huynh, information technology webmaster, G-4, command element, II Marine Expeditionary Force (FWD), knew two English words when he arrived to the United States in 1990. Today, he is helping the Marine Corps communicate in cyberspace.

"I came over to the states when I was 9 with a sponsor—my aunt and uncle," said Huynh.

Huynh's uncle, an American who once served in the United States Embassy in Vietnam, sponsored his family's transition to the land of opportunity.

"It was like a different planet—not knowing anyone or speaking their language," he said, describing his first impression of the United States.

Transitioning to a different country was an enormous change for Huynh, and it took him time to adapt.

"The first couple years were tough," he said. "There were many reasons my first few years were challenging. The main ones were culture shock, language barriers and trying to fit in with the kids."

Huynh had never been to school, and didn't speak much English.

"I had to catch up," he said. "The challenges of learning English were difficult, but I was blessed with great teachers in middle and high school. Thanks to their commitment in teaching, I

was able to gradually learn English."

By the time Huynh reached high school, he was speaking English fluently and was doing well in his studies.

When Huynh was nearing graduation from high school in 1999, he met a Marine recruiter while playing a pickup game of soccer.

"After high school, I knew I wasn't ready for college," he said. "I wanted to build a better foundation before I went. My uncle told me the military was a good place to build a foundation, so I called the recruiter up."

The persona of the recruiter drew him to the Corps.

"I was more impressed by the Marine recruiter than other services."

Huynh enlisted, completed his basic training and worked as a motor transport operator early in his career. When his commanders discovered his proficiency in computer technology, he was assigned duties in information technology.

Growing up, the technology enthusiast enjoyed working with computers in his spare time.

"My hobby is playing with computers," he said.

Additionally, Huynh has served as a primary marksmanship instructor, helping educate Marines on proper firing techniques.

Today, the Vietnam native maintains a Web site, and aids in correcting computer glitches aboard Camp Fallujah. He is also pursuing a college degree in information technology.



Sgt. Trung M. Huynh

Boise boys help keep Fallujah safe

Cpl. Mike Escobar
2nd Marine Division

FALLUJAH, Iraq -- The M-1A1 Abrams Main Battle Tank is a powerful weapon that Boise, Idaho, native Lance Cpl. Trent Hinchcliff wields to turn insurgent hideouts into terrorist rubble.

"These tanks mostly serve as a deterrent, making insurgents feel incapable of opposing us," exclaimed the 25-year-old tank crewman, who currently serves with 2nd Tank Battalion, 2nd Marine Division. "Tanks give us the ability to provide (ground infantry personnel) excellent security and surveillance capabilities."

Hinchcliff's Boise-based reserve unit, Company C, was activated in January to assist their fellow Marine infantrymen throughout western Iraq's Al Anbar province.

Hinchcliff, a former student of economics at Boise State University, arrived here in mid-March. Since then, he, his fellow tankers, and the armored juggernauts they pilot have rolled out on dozens of missions in and around Fallujah.

Approximately nine months ago, Marines fighting in Fallujah relied heavily on the Abrams massive firepower to subdue terrorists occupying the city. However, a well-placed 120 mm round courtesy of the Abrams' quickly breached the insurgent fortresses.

Though insurgents continue attacking military convoys and patrols with roadside bombs, peace has largely returned to Fallujah. The Abrams' firepower and intimidation factor continue being a key element to success on the battlefield, nevertheless.

"We've mostly been providing security in the city by showing our presence and watching out for people emplacing bombs," Hinchcliff said, explaining how he and his crew frequently observe highly transited military routes cutting

through Fallujah.

The tank provides gunners with excellent surveillance capabilities during these routine missions. These armored behemoths come equipped with systems permitting a stabilized night and daytime 360 degree field of vision. Once a terrorist is sighted, it's all downhill for him.

The tank's main armament consists of a 120 mm M256 smooth bore gun, primarily used against armored vehicles. For protection against smaller targets, a tank commander wields an M2 .50 caliber heavy machinegun, while fellow crewmen like Hinchcliff man a 7.62 M240G medium machinegun.

"We're also getting a canister round soon, which works similar to a shotgun shell," Hinchcliff said, explaining how this anti-personnel round can be fired from the tank's main gun.

The Abrams can inflict heavy damage on terrorists, but the insurgency fails to return the favor. These tanks come ar-

mored against even nuclear, biological and chemical assaults, as their steel-encased depleted uranium armor protect them from everything but the strongest of assaults. These defenses have already proven effective against insurgents' roadside bombs, one of the insurgents' primary weapons in Iraq.

"We hit a bomb once, but this tank handled it really well," Hinchcliff explained. "All we saw was a cloud of smoke envelop us. We were thinking, 'Wow, we hit a bomb.' We rolled forward a few hundred meters, fixed our damaged tread, then got on the move again."

Although these tanks may seem like unstoppable juggernauts, Hinchcliff added that he is grateful for not having to unleash the beast's armaments.

"It's a good thing we haven't had much excitement. It seems like we're doing our job well enough here, because Fallujah's

See Boise, Page 9



Cpl. Mike Escobar

Lance Cpl. Henry Andelo de Armas, right, an infantryman with 1st Platoon, Company C, 1st Battalion, 6th Marine Regiment, 2nd Marine Division, helps fellow Marines search through a half-ruined building here July 24.

Marine battles back personal loss

Cpl. Ruben D. Maestre

II Marine Expeditionary Force (FWD)

CAMP FALLUJAH, Iraq -- The life of Lance Cpl. Thomas R. Patterson is a tale of personal strength through tough times. Deployed for a second tour to Iraq last March, the 21-year-old from Columbus, Ohio, returned back to the states within a week to bury his mother.

"I received two weeks to go home to attend my mother's funeral and get my head together," said the activated Marine reservist. "I didn't really feel like I had enough time to deal with the loss and put myself back together because I was in shambles after losing my mom."

Despite his loss, Patterson found inspiration from his mother's wisdom. The trained telephone wireman realized he had to continue and not give up on himself or those around him.

"I found out a quick lesson in life. I had to say to myself, 'My mom is gone, but I still have a life to live. That is what she would want,'" said the administrative support staff member assigned with the Base Operations and Life Support section, II Marine Expeditionary Force, Headquarters Group, II MEF (FWD). "I didn't want to run away from my responsibilities and the Marine Corps is one of them."

Being responsible was not a major concern for Patterson when he attended Gahanna-Lincoln High School in Gahanna, Ohio, a suburb of Columbus. Growing up in Columbus with family members battling drug addiction and run-ins with the law, Patterson did fairly well in grade school and dreamed of attending Ohio State University.

Ironically, it was when he moved in with his father in Gahanna, he started slipping away from his studies.

"You would have thought everything would have been a lot easier for me. I lived in an upper class neighborhood, was enrolled in a good school district and the people around me were actually doing something positive," said the 2002 high school graduate. "That wasn't the case though. My grades dropped tremendously, I became a little bit more rebellious and I was lucky I never got into any trouble with the law."

The negative actions of his family in Columbus had brought heartfelt pain to Patterson. He used his anguish as an excuse to be irresponsible in high school, but Patterson knew if he were to accomplish his goal of attending Ohio State, he would have to find the determination necessary to achieve his dream.

He decided to join the Marine Corps.

"My main reason for joining was the discipline factor," said Patterson. "A big goal of mine was to go to college, but I knew I wasn't going to be able to do it with the grades I made in high school."

His mother was proud of him becoming a Marine. As a member of the reserves, he was assigned to Communications Company, Headquarters Battalion, 4th Marine Division, based in Cincinnati.

With new resolve, Patterson also began taking courses at a local community college.

"My whole attitude about myself and my education just changed," said the new

See Patterson, Page 9



Cpl. Ruben D. Maestre

Lance Cpl. Thomas R. Patterson, 21, of Columbus, Ohio, and an administrative support staff member assigned with the Base Operations and Life Support section, II Marine Expeditionary Force, Headquarters Group, II MEF (FWD), poses with members of the Iraqi Army at a joint duty station July 21. Despite the recent loss of his mother, the 2002 graduate of Gahanna-Lincoln High School continues to serve alongside his fellow Marines, service members and Iraqi allies.

Boise, from Page 7

security has improved significantly. The Marines have done a good job maintaining security here.”

Several more months and missions here await Hinchcliff and his fellow tankers, where they will endure hellish heat in and out of their tanks.

“It gets to be about 130 degrees inside the tank,” Hinchcliff stated. “Sometimes it takes everything in me to not fall asleep and keep vigilant in this heat.”

These hardships have served not only to safeguard the formerly war-torn Fallujah, but to teach Marines like Hinchcliff, who is on his first deployment, valuable life lessons.

“Probably the most important thing I’ve learned is how much I love my wife (Andrea),” Hinchcliff said. “I have a much better appreciation for those who’ve come here before, and all of the sacrifices they made. I’m really proud to be serving my country, and I’m thankful for all the support people back home have given us.”



Sgt. Juan Vara

An M1A1 Abrams tank provides area security alongside a street intersection here beside Marines from Weapons Company, 1st Battalion, 6th Marine Regiment, 2nd Marine Division, during a recent operation in western Iraq's Al Anbar province.



Cpl. Ruben D. Maestre

Lance Cpl. Thomas R. Patterson, 21, of Columbus, Ohio, and an administrative support staff member assigned with the Base Operations and Life Support section, II Marine Expeditionary Force, Headquarters Group, II MEF (FWD), poses next to an M-240G machine gun July 20.

Patterson, from Page 8

Marine. “I went from just barely getting a 2.0 [grade point average] in high school and being tardy 27 times during

my senior year to reaching a 4.0 my first quarter in college and having perfect attendance.”

Cutting his studies short, Patterson was deployed to Iraq in February 2004,

serving nearly eight months at Camp Blue Diamond in Ramadi, Iraq.

The college student returned to Iraq five months later providing administrative support to his section and assisting in any duties arising from II MEF Headquarters Group.

Despite the demanding regimen, Patterson is content with his choice in joining the Marine Corps. The self-confidence, self-discipline and the bonds forged here have affected him immensely.

“The thing I like the most about the Marine Corps is camaraderie. Marines are the most disciplined, physically fit and confident group of people I have ever been around,” said Patterson. “Being a Marine is synonymous with being the best and I am glad I can call myself a Marine.”

The wayward high school student who became a Marine has been accepted into Ohio State University starting next spring. Patterson is considering moving from business studies to pursuing a teaching degree upon completion of his tour.