

The Eagle and The Crescent

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Transition to Self-Reliance

May 13, 2005

2nd MarDiv rolls over insurgents

Sgt. Stephen D'Alessio
2nd Marine Division

CAMP BLUE DIAMOND, AR RAMADI, Iraq – Insurgents have taken severe casualties this week during an offensive driven by 2nd Marine Division and its various commands throughout Al Anbar Province.

Service members with Regimental Combat Team 2 took part in its heaviest battle to date, Sunday, as the operation ensued in the village of Ubaydi, on the southern side of the Euphrates River near the Al Jazirah Desert. The first 24 hours of the operation indicated nearly 75 insurgents were killed by the Marines in an area known to be an insurgent and foreign fighter staging area.

“Our analysis is that there’s a foreign fighter flow from Syria,” said Col. Stephen Davis, commander of RCT-2. “The trademark of these folks is to be where we’re not. We haven’t gone north of the river for a while.”

The following day, Soldiers with the Army’s 814th Multi-Role Bridge Company built a pontoon bridge across the Euphrates for RCT-2 Marines, who continued the fight in the Al Jazirah Desert.

“The insurgents we’re fighting today are not the guys getting \$50 to put an IED on the side of the road,” said Davis. “These are the professional fighters who have come from all over the Middle East. These are people who have received training and are very well armed.”

Insurgents responded with suicide car bombs, machine guns and RPG fire. One suicide car bomb was successful in damaging an armored humvee but a Marine M1A1 Abrams Main Battle Tank engaged a second, both bombers were killed. Subsequently, 10 insurgents surrendered and are being held at a nearby detention center in Al Qaim.



Lance Cpl. Marc Fencil

HADITHAH, Iraq - Marines with 3rd Battalion, 25th Marine Regiment secured a hospital from which they were attacked by insurgents May 8. Medical staff and patients were held hostage as insurgents used SVBIEDs and small arms fire to engage the Marines. Insurgents then resorted to using patients at human shields when Marines cleared the hospital.

Earlier in the week, in the city of Hadithah, insurgents attacked Marines of 3rd Battalion, 25th Marine Regiment from a hospital. Medical staff and patients were held hostage as enemy forces used Suicide Vehicle-Borne Improvised Explosive Devices in the firefight. Three Marines were killed by an SVBIED that exploded near the hospital. One sailor was killed later during the firefight.

Insurgents resorted to using patients as human shields as the Marines swept inside the hospital, killing several insurgents attempting to flee. The Marines relocated the staff and patients from the ward before the hospital burned. No Iraqi civilians died during the fight.

On May 3, two Iraqi civilians and an Iraqi Security Force soldier were killed in an attack at an entry control point northwest of Ramadi. Marines with 1st Battalion, 5th Marines and ISF soldiers repelled the insurgents, wounding four and detaining five. Two Marines and two ISF soldiers were wounded.

The ECPs were newly raised in the provincial capital at the request of the Iraqi government. The ECPs serve as a security measure which restricts insurgent movements and minimizes the smuggling of arms and explosives used by terrorists.

The Marines in the Al Jazirah Desert continue operations to eliminate smuggling routes used by the insurgents and to promote prosperity and security in the region.

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FRIDAY	SATURDAY	SUNDAY	MONDAY
 Low: 95F High: 97F DUST	 Low: 70F High: 100F HAZE	 Low: 70F High: 99F DUST	 Low: 70F High: 99F
Sunrise 0607D Sunset 1958D ILLUM 24%	Sunrise 0606D Sunset 2000D ILLUM 32%	Sunrise 0605D Sunset 2000D ILLUM 41%	Sunrise 0605D Sunset 2001D ILLUM 51%

Camp Fallujah

MWR events

Advance Screening: The Ambassadors of Hollywood, Amanda Swisten, Dean Cain and Kelly Hu will be visiting the camp. There will be an advance screening of the movie "Lost" with Dean Cain tonight at 10 p.m. in the camp theater/chapel. On Saturday from 10 a.m. to noon at the PX court yard, take pictures and get autographs with all three celebrities.

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

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

From the Director of Public Affairs:

Dear Reader – Welcome to another edition of the The Eagle & The Crescent. My Marines and I strive each week to paint a picture of the lives led here in Iraq by the men and women of II MEF (Forward). The stories told herein focus on people and personalities, not breaking news or politics. They are stories of day-to-day living; of seemingly routine tasks performed in a foreign land; of men and women focused on a mission. It is a mission that will not succeed overnight, but over time, with tenacity, patience and dedication tested constantly by heat, tension, and distance from home. We find such stories are often overlooked within the popular media and least often shared with our families and friends back home.

My hope is you'll know your service men and women a bit better after you read this newsletter, and I invite you to both share it with others and let me know how it can be improved. It is one more way you can support the Marines, Soldiers, Sailors, Airmen and civilians of Multi-National Force – West.

LtCol. Dave Lapan

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II Marine Expeditionary Force (FWD)

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Chaplain's Corner:

Eyeballs check: Where are your eyeballs?

Lt. Cmdr. Phillip E. Lee
8th Communication Bn.



Shortly after arriving at Parris Island for boot camp, I was introduced to a question that had never been posed to me prior to putting my feet on those yellow

footprints.

The question was, "Where are your eyeballs?" The drill instructors asked this question regularly during the first few weeks following my arrival because they were intent on teaching the members of my platoon the discipline of looking straight ahead while at the position of attention. The impression made upon me by this question still rings in my ears sometimes after being called to attention.

I don't seem to stand at attention near as much these days, but I have found a new use for this question. As I perform my daily activities, constantly lurking nearby is the temptation to put my eyes only on my own interests and my own situation. If I am not careful, I can get so busy dwelling on my tasks and trying to take care of myself that I lose sight of those around me. To help protect me from getting tangled in this snare I try to ask myself frequently, "Where are your eyeballs?"

The best answer to this question will reflect a greater concern for the interests of others.

Many of us say we care for others and even more of us like to think we care for others more than ourselves. However, seldom do we take time to show such care by focusing intently on the needs and concerns of our fellow Marines and

Sailors in the same manner in which we concentrate on our own lives. The opposite should be true of us if we hope to achieve the character and commitment associated with great people (Matthew 7:12).

I am told, "A person's eyes are the windows to one's soul." If someone looked into your eyes today, would they find them filled with self interest ("full of yourself") or filled with a concern for others?

Amazingly, the way you change the levels of self interest in your own eyes is by looking into the eyes of others with a deeper consideration for their well-being. You will have to take time, make time if you must, in your busy routine to look into the eyes of others and see how they are doing. Even if you cannot change their situation, they will notice that you cared enough to look and noticed their circumstances. Sometimes just knowing someone else cares gives a person the strength to press forward.

Leaders must help their people press forward. Good leaders don't become so busy they forget to care for those who follow them. In fact, the best leaders not only take care of their people but also their peoples' people (families). Whether you are leading at the level of a private first class or a general, the eyeballs check works in the same manner and affords the same results. Eyeballs check! Where are your eyes?

Put them on your Marines and you can do a better job at taking care of them. You will also find you have little time for less than desirable distractions. God bless you in such endeavors. May the fruit of your efforts make the world we live in a better place beginning right here in Iraq!

Hebrews 10:24

A Battery reaches out, touches enemy

Lance Cpl. Evan M. Eagan

II Marine Expeditionary Force (FWD)

CAMP FALLUJAH, Iraq -- They are not often seen, but they're definitely heard. In the late hours of the night or in the early morning, the thundering blasts shake the ground, which can be felt across the camp here and causes many service members to ask, "Was that incoming or outgoing?"

In most cases it's outgoing, and the artillery Marines of Alpha Battery, 1st Battalion, 10th Marines, 2nd Marine Division, are the ones making all the noise.

"We provide support for any and everybody that calls for us," said Gunnery Sgt. Michael Jones, Alpha Battery gunnery sergeant, 1/10. "Any unit that calls for fire, if it's cleared and confirmed we fire on the targets they call on and we take them out."

Alpha Battery, which is 140 Marines strong, is made up of six sections, two of which rotate into the city to provide security at the Civil Military Operations Center and the Fallujah Liaison Team site.



Armed with M198 medium-towed Howitzers, the Marines of Alpha Battery are busy around the clock providing counter battery fire for Camp Fallujah.

"Most of the missions have been counter fire," said Sgt. Steve Pullins, operations chief, fire direction control center. "After the enemy fires on us, we can get rounds back on them in about four or five minutes."

And when it comes to long range, these Marines go the distance.

The FDCC processes anywhere from 30 to 35 missions a day, however, they may end up shooting only once, said 2nd Lt. Ryan King, fire direction officer, FDCC.

"We wish we could get more action," King said with a smile. "We're more than ready for it."

No one knows this better than the Marines assigned to gun three.

As soon as they get word of a possible target, the Marines rush to get their gear on and prepare the Howitzer for the shot, however, more times than not, the mission is ended before they fire.

"We do this all day," said Sgt. Ryan Hurtado, section chief, gun three, a Prescott, Ariz., native. "The guys get pumped up when we get something, and then the mission is usually ended."

The first time Alpha Battery deployed to Iraq, during Operation Iraqi Freedom I, they came with the rest of 1/10 as a battalion. According to Jones, 75 percent of the Marines are new and were not with the battery at the time.

"The Marines have been motivated out here to do their part for whatever mission," Jones said. "The morale is high. These Marines are good at what they are doing. They are very proficient."



Photos by Lance Cpl. Evan M. Eagan

(Top) Sergeant Ryan Hurtado, section chief, gun three, Alpha Battery, 1st Battalion, 10th Marine Regiment, 2nd Marine Division, holds up a round for the M198 medium-towed Howitzer.

(Left) A Marine from A Battery, 1/10, prepares the M198 medium-towed Howitzer for a shot.

8th ESB powers fight in Iraq

Sgt. Kristin S. Jochums
2nd Force Service Support Group(FWD)

CAMP TAQADDUM, Iraq -- The heavy burden of ensuring the functional capabilities of more than 200 pieces of tactical electrical equipment, which provide mission essential and life-saving support here, rests comfortably on the shoulders of the utilities platoon Marines, Support Company, 8th Engineer Support Battalion, 2nd Force Service Support Group (FWD).

The responsibility for the generators, flood lights and mobile electrical power distribution systems that keep the base up and running are junior Marines, most fresh out of their military occupational specialty schools, or augmented water purification specialists.

The Marines use their training and experience to ensure power is available to the communication equipment used.

“If we do not provide the power, we do not communicate across Iraq,” said Gunnery Sgt. Preston L. Fuller, the staff noncommissioned officer-in-charge. “[Communications] cannot operate without power; you can’t use your e-mail without power. We are the power people.”

The generators which supply power to the communications equipment, also support the needs of the Surgical Shock Trauma Platoon, Mortuary Affairs, Combat Logistics Regiment 25, 8th ESB, the Supply Management Unit and the other FSSG units here.

“Maintaining the generators is like taking care of a car,” said the Greenville, S.C., native. “The majority of these generators run 24 hours a day, seven days a week.”

Every 300 to 350 hours the Marines take regular preventative maintenance steps to ensure the longevity of the equipment.

The preventative maintenance includes regular oil changes and air, fuel and oil filter changes. This guarantees the generators are producing at the levels they should be.

Corporal Marvin I. Carter is the Marine in charge of handling the preventative maintenance for the generators here.

“The first step is to coordinate with all the sections that have a tactical generator and inform the command that I am about to start [performing preventative maintenance] on their gear,” said the Richmond, Va., native. “This has to be done because the generator will be off for a period of time.”

Carter and another Marine from the section pull a trailer with four 55-gallon drums, including a drum for oil, a drum for antifreeze, and two drums for used antifreeze and oil, so they have what they need to perform the maintenance.

“The area we cover has over 25 different generator sites with at least two different generators per site,” he said. “It normally takes a week to complete the entire trip around the base. I am what you will call your Mobile Jiffy Lube.”

When a generator goes down and its operation is crucial to the mission on base, the Marines respond immediately to repair or replace it.

“There is a contact team on main side consisting of three Marines who are on duty 24 hours a day in case a generator goes down in the middle of the night,” said Fuller. “When the SSTP has a casualty, they call and have one of our Marines on standby at the generator. If it goes down, they can fire the other one up and repair the downed one.”

Maintaining the generators and other equipment is a crucial mission, but these Marines continue to meet the challenges placed before them as Operation Iraqi Freedom continues.



Sgt. Kristin S. Jochums

Lance Cpl. Mario C. Figueroa, a Brooklyn, N.Y. native, changes the oil in one of the many generators here May 2. The Marines of the utilities platoon, Support Company, 8th Engineer Support Battalion, 2d Force Service Support Group (FWD), are responsible for the maintenance of the generators, flood lights and mobile electrical power distribution systems that keep the base up and running.

Sending out well trained Iraqi forces

Lance Cpl. Athanasios L. Genos
2nd Marine Division

CAMP FALLUJAH, Iraq -- At the inception of the Iraqi Security Force, it was unclear what the future would hold for its service members.

Today, with the assistance of the Marines, they are gaining control over insurgent activities here and stabilizing their country.

The soldiers with 2nd Battalion, Muthanna Brigade of the ISF began working with 3rd Battalion, 8th Marine Regiment in January prior to the Iraqi national elections. The Marines mentored them, helping to combine the discipline and tactics of the Corps with their knowledge of the area and culture to better protect the country from insurgents and allow for a

safe, democratic election.

“When we first started working with them, I had them show us what they knew instead of us telling them what to do. It helped us get off to a good start,” said Capt. Andrew M. Del Gaudio, the senior battalion advisor to 2nd Battalion, Muthanna Brigade. “We were fortunate to have a well disciplined group who saw the election as their own.”

After the successful election, the two groups pushed forward with the joint training, helping to familiarize the Marines with their battalion’s area of operations and giving the ISF a solid foundation of knowledge from which to operate.

The Marines began training the Iraqis in vehicle and personnel check points, mounted and dismounted patrols, and

general military skills. Most of the training the ISF received was on-the-job, which enabled them to work hand-and-hand with the Marines learning from their experience and knowledge.

While they learned from the Marines, they also brought a valuable resource to the operations they conducted; knowledge of the culture and language.

They learned by our example. Working hand-and-hand with us in real operations allowed them to learn very quickly, while at the same time bring a lot of their local knowledge to the table,” Del Gaudio stated.

The Muthanna Brigade has been working with the Marines for nearly four months.

“These guys are by far the best I have worked with out of the many groups I have advised,” said Del Gaudio. “With the Muthanna Brigade we gave them a piece of the pie and they just kept on running with it. They want peace in their country.”



Photos by Lance Cpl. Athanasios L. Genos

(Right) Iraqi soldiers from the Iraqi Security Forces help direct traffic while Marines and other ISF soldiers check out a possible site where shots were fired. The ISF work regularly with the Marines, going on patrols and providing main service road security.

(Top) Iraqi Security Force members do pushups while their commanding officer talks to them. The ISF soldiers conduct their physical training in a manner similar to the Marines.



Frocking proves abilities, leadership

Cpl. Christi Prickett

II Marine Expeditionary Force (FWD)

CAMP FALLUJAH, Iraq -- After serving as executive officer for 2nd Military Police Battalion, II Marine Expeditionary Force (FWD), since the end of March, Captain Amy R. Ebitz was ready to be promoted to her selected rank. Her husband, Maj. Curtis V. Ebitz, flew in to help pin on her new rank.

Captain Ebitz was frocked to major May 1 here during a ceremony, presided over by Maj. Gen. Stephen T. Johnson, commanding general, II Marine Expeditionary Force (FWD).

"It is an honor to be here today, giving Captain Ebitz a rank that is well deserved," the general said. "With the rank [of major] comes new responsibilities and new experiences and I have faith that she will live up to those."

Curtis, who was able to pin his wife during the ceremony, is an augment from Marine Aircraft Group 29, assigned to the Tactical Air Command Center, 2nd Marine Air Wing (FWD), and is currently stationed at Al Asad, Iraq. He works as the rotary-wing tasker and flies as an augment pilot with Marine Medium Helicopter Squadron 264, based out of Marine Corps Air Station New River, N.C.

"It was a very special moment for me," said Curtis, speaking of his wife's frocking. "I am extremely proud of her and what she has accomplished to date. I am glad I was able to make it here today."

Amy, who has been in the Corps for 10 years, sees her frocking as just part of her journey in the Marine Corps.

"I don't think of the pay part of it," she said. "I see this as my promotion, which is a huge milestone. I am ready for this."

As an executive officer, Ebitz's duties are centered around helping her staff.

"Ninety percent of what I do is personnel related," she said. "As XO, I have a say in what goes on. I just like to lead and take care of my Marines."

This is Ebitz's second deployment to Iraq. Her first tour was last year with the same battalion.

"I have been through the tough times with my Marines," she said. "When I was here last time, as a company commander, I completed over 50 convoys with them. They amaze me because even with the hard times, their fears were put aside and we pulled through."

When Amy was first deployed, it was hard on Curtis because he understood what was going on.

"He knew if I went out on a convoy that there were risks," she said. "Most people don't understand all that we go through as Marines, but he does."

'I just like to lead and take care of my Marines.'

Maj. Amy R. Ebitz
2nd Military Police Battalion

Being married in the Corps has its ups and downs, Curtis explained.

"A lot of people ask how we handle it," said Amy. "As a Marine family, we both do it because we want to."

Curtis has his own thoughts.

"We want to continue together as Marines," he said. "The Marine Corps emphasizes strong morals and character and we bring that into our relationship.

Our relationship is based on trust and we confide in each other. We know what the other person is going through."

Amy and Curtis met while at Amphibious Warfare School, Quantico, Va., and were married on Oct. 11, 2003.

"The pieces just fell together for us to be here together," said Curtis. "It's not often you see your wife in a combat zone, so I cherish every opportunity I get. She deserved her frocking because she has proven herself, yet again, and she has been performing well above the expectations."



1st Lt. Nicholas Hurndon

Major Amy R. Ebitz, executive officer, 2nd Military Police Battalion, II Marine Expeditionary Force (FWD), was frocked on May 1. Her husband, Major Curtis V. Ebitz, rotary-wing tasker, tactical air command center, 2nd Marine Air Wing, was able to fly in from Al Asad, Iraq for the ceremony. Curtis says he is very proud of his wife and her accomplishments.

Chicago native does his part in PSD

Lance Cpl. Athanasios L. Genos
2nd Marine Division

CAMP FALLUJAH, Iraq -- As the sun began to rise, Lance Cpl. Juan T. O'Neal donned his protective gear in preparation for the day's journey.

The Chicago native is part of the Personal Security Detachment, which keeps a watchful eye on the 3rd Battalion, 8th Marine Regiment's executive officer as he travels throughout the unit's area of operations.

"Whenever we get out of the vehicles I stay close to him providing security with the other Marines," said O'Neal, a 2003 Brownsville Military Academy graduate.

O'Neal and his fellow Marines with PSD are prepared to face any attack the insurgents may plan, to ensure Maj. Larry Miller's safe movement through their AO. The PSD has fended off a number of attacks in the past as they provided security for the XO.

"When out with the XO there is usually something happening," explained O'Neal. "We are usually out in the action and our convoys have been regularly hit by enemy attacks."

Each time the vehicles stop to check out anything along the road or to search a house, O'Neal and the other Marines exit the vehicle first to check for improvised explosive devices.

"Out on convoys and patrols we are always searching the streets and houses for



Lance Cpl. Athanasios L. Genos

Sitting in the back of the vehicle, Lance Cpl. Juan T. O'Neal waits for the patrol to stop. O'Neal is one of the Marines who works on the Personal Security Detachment when Maj. Larry Miller, Battalion Executive Officer, goes out.

IED's and any weapons," O'Neal said.

While on foot, O'Neal has his personal radio on him at all times ensuring he is always in communication with the vehicles and other Marines in the convoy. Staying connected ensures that he is aware of any threat in the area and is able to provide the best security possible for the XO.

"We keep radio contact all the time because the XO and I may be in a different room or different houses and if something happens we need to always be in radio contact to get other Marines to us or for us to get to them," O'Neal explained.

As the battalion continues to conduct operations here supporting Operation Iraqi Freedom, O'Neal and his fellow Marines will continue to ensure Miller's safety as he provides the subordinate units with guidance to direct their efforts in stabilizing the country.

"O'Neal has one of the unsung jobs and his role is to always protect the battalion commander or myself, putting his own safety aside every time out," explained Miller.

Caught in the Spotlight

CAMP FALLUJAH, Iraq - - With a father and an uncle retiring from the Corps, and a need for a challenge in his life, it was second nature for Sgt. Marvie V. Paje, a San Diego native, to be a Marine.

Paje, combat camera noncommissioned officer, G-3, II Marine Expeditionary Force, Headquarters Group, II MEF (FWD), is an augment deployed here from Marine Corps Base Hawaii.

"I felt that at the time I joined, I could do more with my life," said the Filipino Marine. "I knew the Marine Corps would develop my sense of responsibility, positive character, and my education."

Paje joined in November 1999 after graduating from East Lake High School the same year. After boot camp, he attended Defense Mapping School at Ft. Belvoir, Va. to learn his job and was then stationed at Marine Corps Base Camp Pendleton, Calif.

Even though Paje was stationed at Okinawa, Japan for one year, he considers this his first deployment.

"It's everything I expected," he said. "The living conditions are reasonable, considering we're in Iraq, and the workload is what I expected. We

all work a lot though."

As a combat camera Marine, Paje is in charge of the print reproduction department. He designs letterhead, signs, and other artwork requested by every unit in the II MEF (FWD) area of operation. Some examples of his daily print jobs are memorial service bulletins, medical forms and training manuals.

"It feels good to know we provide a service that can't be contracted out to civilians," said Paje. "Plus, the training manuals we print are essential to the Marine Corps mission, so I know I'm doing what needs to be done."



Sgt. Marvie V. Paje

Paje, who enjoys skateboarding and listening to punk and alternative music, is also the serviceman for the various copy machines his unit uses.

"If a unit needs a large number of copies, or a special request, they should come to me," he said. "Our copiers can handle the load that their copiers can't."

After his current contract is up, Paje plans on getting out of the Corps to finish college. He wants to stay in the same line of work he is in now.

"I already have offers from large printing companies wanting to hire me," he said.

Marines gain citizenship while serving in Iraq

Cpl. C.J. Yard

2nd Force Service Support Group (FWD)

CAMP FALLUJAH, Iraq -- Two Marines fighting the Global War on Terrorism are also fighting a personal battle for themselves ... attempting to gain U.S. citizenship while deployed here to Iraq.

"I know I need to get this [before] my Marine Corps career is done," said Lance Cpl. Valdemar Duarte, a truck driver with Charlie Company Motor Pool, Combat Logistics Battalion 8, 2nd Force Service Support Group (FWD). "This will help me get a better job when I get out."

Duarte and Lance Cpl. Simon Delgado started the process in December after returning from their Revised Combined Arms Exercise.

"We came back from RCAX and I wanted to get everything straight," said Delgado, a Norwalk, Calif., native and heavy equipment operator with Charlie Co. "I didn't know that Duarte was trying to get his citi-

zenship too. He just happened to be at [the Base Legal Office] the same time I was."

The two Marines started their paperwork with help from a representative at the Base Legal Office at Camp Lejeune. The representative also keeps the Marines informed about what else they have to do, according to Duarte.

"We had to go get our fingerprints taken in Charlotte, (N.C.)," said Duarte, a Waterbury, Conn., native who was born in the Cape Verde Islands of Africa. "We just drove down there to get our fingerprints taken and then we had to turn around and drive right back so that we could continue to get ready for the deployment."

Duarte, who will be the second in his family to become a U.S. citizen said, it's hard to stay excited about it here because of the operational tempo. Duarte goes on two to three convoys a day with Charlie Co.

Delgado will be the first in his family, originally from Guadalajara, Mexico, to

achieve a goal that he and his mother have been working toward since their move to America.

"I had to wait to get my residency," said Delgado, who was 16 when he finally achieved residency after five years of waiting. "My mom didn't start the process right away because she wanted me to help. She doesn't hear very well and only speaks Spanish."

Delgado's mom has applied for citizenship, but has been denied because of her disability.

"Right now, my mom has hearing aids, but doctors say that over time they won't even help," said Delgado. "It kind of makes me angry because we've had to spend a lot of money and they still deny her application. The good news though is, if she waits until she's 54, she automatically qualifies for citizenship."

With Delgado trying to gain his citizenship, it makes his mom very happy and he tries to keep her informed as much as possible.

"It is kind of hard for me to keep in contact with my mom," said Delgado. "Because the different hours she works it is hard for catch up with her on the phone. I call my cousin in Mexico and she talks to my mom and keeps her informed of everything.

The Marines in Duarte and Delgado's chain of command feel that this is a very good goal for them and are proud of them attempting to get their citizenship.

"Those two are damn good Marines," said 1st Sgt. William Hines, Charlie Company first sergeant and Fort Bragg, Calif., native. "If they can fight a war for their country, why can't they become citizens? This is outstanding and it's a great goal for them."

If the Marines are approved for citizenship, they will take the final step in becoming a naturalized citizen when they are flown to the U.S. Embassy in Kuwait to be sworn in as the final step of the long process.



Cpl. C.J. Yard

Lance Cpl. Valdemar Duarte, a truck driver with Black team, Charlie Company Motor Pool, Combat Logistics Battalion 8, 2d Force Service Support Group (FWD), takes a break on a recent convoy operation. Duarte, a Waterbury, Conn., native, who was born in the Cape Verde Islands of Africa, is attempting to gain U.S. citizenship through the military.

Going on tour takes on new meaning

Lance Cpl. Aaron P. Mankin
II Marine Expeditionary Force (FWD)

CAMP FALLUJAH, Iraq -- A Marine serving in support of Operation Iraqi Freedom left a successful career in order to deploy. Having lived a life laced with music, he now plays to a different tune.

Major Mike Corrado, company commander, Headquarters and Service Company, II Marine Expeditionary Force, Headquarters Group, II MEF (FWD) is the lead vocalist in The Mike Corrado Band. The band has played concerts with several recording artists including Vertical Horizon, Train and John Mayer.

Corrado had a flare for music at a young age.

"I originally started out playing drums when I was in second grade," said Corrado, Jacksonville N.C. native. "When I was in college I bought a guitar and learned how to play just because I started doing some writing."

Corrado started performing in bars wherever he could play. He later found Marines who were serving in the 2nd Marine Division Band and desired to form a band of their own. The Mike Corrado Band was born and has continued to evolve.

"It [the band] went from all Marines to no Marines other than myself and now back to two of its original members," explained Corrado.

It would have been easy for Corrado to find talent in the Division Band, but he was looking for something more.

"You have to find people with the right vision too," he continued. "As we started getting bigger in the Carolinas, it was a little bit easier to find people who wanted to play. We were out there making a name for ourselves, things were moving up and things were getting bigger with every month that went by. I had a little more flexibility to pick people that I thought would perform well."

Upon leaving the states for his deployment, Corrado released a solo album titled *Falling Awake*. He dedicated the recording to his wife Kate and his 5-month-old daughter Olivia.

The song *My Watch* contains backup vocals by recording artist Edwin McCain. Corrado and McCain have been friends since 1992. McCain had his own way of showing his support of Corrado's decision to defend the United States.

"Edwin gave me a guitar to bring over here," Corrado said. "He has been a good mentor. He has been through some ups and downs and he has been through some pitfalls. He's given

me a lot of advice along the way."

With the support of his family and friends, Corrado was willing to put his dream on hold. He takes his duty serious and wants there to be no misunderstanding about why he made his decision.

"Sometimes there is a misconception between what the media put out compared to what people here really feel," explained Corrado. "People aren't here under duress. We signed up to support our country and its constitution and if this is what it takes, then here we are."

Corrado has plans to complete his tour of duty and return to the stage with his musical comrades.

"With this whole thing about taking time off the road, I could have just said no thanks, but I look at this as my personal tax for the freedoms I enjoy and the freedoms my family enjoys," he continued. "Being away from them and being here with these Marines and supporting whatever mission is tasked to us, if that's what's asked of me, then that's the least I can do for everything that I enjoy."



Lance Cpl. Aaron P. Mankin

What began as a song writing flair, Major Mike Corrado, company commander, Headquarters and Service Company, II Marine Expeditionary Force, Headquarters Group, II MEF (FWD) is now the lead vocalist in The Mike Corrado Band. Corrado, who put his musical career on hold for the time being, is a friend of Edwin McCain, who gave him a guitar before his tour of duty in Iraq.