

# The Eagle & The Crescent

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Transition to Self-Reliance

Oct. 28, 2005

## Iraqi battalion begins with Wing Marines

Staff Sgt. Brenda L. Varnadore  
2nd Marine Aircraft Wing (FWD)

HIT, Iraq -- The yellow footprints at Marine Corps recruit depots are the beginning of a new chapter for every Marine and are never forgotten. For a new battalion of Iraqi soldiers, their different life began with the faces of 11 Marines and one Sailor from the 2nd Marine Aircraft Wing.

The 2nd MAW (FWD) Military Transition Team met their new recruits June 9, and spent the next few months training them to become the 1st Battalion, 2nd Brigade of the 7th Iraqi Army Division.

The team assembled during May and after receiving a close quarters combat package traveled to An Numaniyah, Iraq, where they processed 795 recruits, who would later become 666 Iraqi Soldiers.

The process of forming the new team was surprisingly smooth, said 1st Lt. Alden Hingle III, an intelligence officer and MiTT member.

"Once we had a few days together, it was as if we had been working together long before the assignment," said the Fredericksburg, Va., native. "Everyone worked well together. All members were very excited about their chance to contribute something with lasting effects to the country."

The Marines and corpsman trained the Iraqi soldiers during the next four months utilizing the crawl, walk, run method, said Maj. Keith Chirico, an AV-8B Harrier pilot and MiTT leader. Most had been trained as Iraqi soldiers during Saddam Hussein's reign and just needed to be brushed up on discipline and military protocol.

"I clearly knew what the end state needed to be," said Chirico. "They needed discipline and that is what we focused on."



Staff Sgt. Brenda L. Varnadore

First Lt. Alden Hingle III, an intelligence officer and member of the 2nd Marine Aircraft Wing (FWD) Military Transition Team, explains squad leaders roles to two members of the 1st Battalion, 2nd Brigade of the 7th Iraqi Army Division, at the Hit Train Station in Iraq, Oct. 15.

The Marines on the team had to overcome some small problems training the new Iraqis, said Hingle.

"There were many (problems), but nothing the Marines on the team couldn't handle," he said. "I'd say the cultural barrier was the most difficult. We respected the differences and we had to adjust how we did business in order to reach desired end states. In some cases, just making the effort helped out. Everyone even learned a little Arabic, which also increased the soldiers' comfort level."

The team included Chirico, Hingle, Capt. Dan Colvin, aircraft maintenance officer; 1st. Lt. Mike Berger, combat engineer

officer; Gunnery Sgt. Karl Garrett, communications repairman; Staff Sgt. Joaquin Alvarado, artillery support coordinator; Sgt. George Carter, communications chief; Petty Officer 2nd Class Jarrett Garland, corpsman; Sgt. Jacob Laskowski, intelligence chief; Sgt. Charles Evanson, motor transportation mechanic; and Cpl. John Perkins, artillery support coordinator.

The members had been assembled for this mission and had not previously worked together. They instantly bonded and most extended to accomplish the mission, said Master Gunnery Sgt. William H. Butler,

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FRIDAY	SATURDAY	SUNDAY	MONDAY
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Sunrise 0619C Sunset 1717C ILLUM 19%	Sunrise 0620C Sunset 1716C ILLUM 12%	Sunrise 0621C Sunset 1715C ILLUM 6%	Sunrise 0622C Sunset 1714C ILLUM 2%

By Gunnery Sgt. Steven L. Saxton

## Letters to the Editor:

\*I am now getting The Eagle and Crescent. Thank you. And thank you for your service that has seen the Iraqi people vote for and approve THEIR CONSTITUTION. That's Wonderful.

Jon Van Derhoof

\*Thank you for the effort to bring Old Devil Dogs like me, the news about our courageous Marines fighting terrorism around the world.

God Bless all of you and keep up the good work. I served for six years and then blew out my left knee and was discharged. However, at age 70, I still teach the active duty Marines hand-to-hand combat at the 1st MCD, in Garden City, New York. I drive 70 miles round trip, twice a week to stay with my beloved Marines.

I have also visited the MCMAP under Colonel Joe Shusko, at Quantico three times thus far and had a return trip by the colonel to my dojo in NY. We have become close friends. You honor all former Marines by bringing us the real scoop since our liberal media lie till the cows come home.

Semper Fidelis,  
Ed McGrath, Hanshi-Go

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### Recognize a service member

\*"Project Freedom" is a program of the American Security Council Foundation that seeks to inform the American public about the actions of our service members in combat or during reconstruction and humanitarian assistance operations in Iraq and Afghanistan.

Members are nominated directly to the Foundation through a form on their Web site. Anybody can make the nomination. The Foundation will select members to recognize, develop their stories, and then purchase the necessary air time and newspaper space in order to reach the American public. The below story posted on the DoD Web site describes the program.

DefenseLink.mil article:

[http://www.defenselink.mil/news/Oct2005/20051004\\_2921.html](http://www.defenselink.mil/news/Oct2005/20051004_2921.html)

Project Freedom information and submission site:

[http://www.ascfusa.org/index.php?option=com\\_mosforms&Itemid=44](http://www.ascfusa.org/index.php?option=com_mosforms&Itemid=44)

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# Communication is the key

**Chaplain (Lt.) Guy A. Thompson**  
*Naval Mobile Construction Bn. 3*



While it is clear we transmit and exchange information and opinions every day, it is sometimes unclear how effective we are in communicating with one another.

Everything is subject to interpretation, and proper interpretation is dependent upon proper communication. A message sent and received is not necessarily a message properly interpreted.

The most vital aspect of communication is ensuring that we communicate effectively, which would prevent common misunderstanding and misdirection. Some of you may be familiar with the phrase, "What we have here is a failure to communicate," and when there is a failure to communicate at any level, you can be sure that problems are not far behind. Parents and children, husbands and wives, boyfriends and girlfriends, workers and supervisors, teachers and students, customers and sales representatives, and politicians and voters are just a few examples of the relationships that require constant

communication. Think of when you have had a problem in any of these relationships, and I contend that more times than not the root problem was either poor communication or no communication at all.

Nothing is more destructive to a relationship than "communication breakdown." Tension is high and decisions need to be made, but no one is communicating. Afterward, when everything falls apart, we are left standing and wondering what went wrong. Well, here is the answer, "lack of communication."

It is not uncommon for people to avoid communicating because of the possible tension involved; but taking a passive attitude towards communication actually makes the situation worse. There are also situations in which people have poor communication skills or no communication skills at all, so they refuse to communicate because they do not know how. Communication is a skill that must be learned and sharpened, and it is essential to any successful relationship.

I encourage you to take time to work on your communication skills, especially if you are married or involved in a serious relationship. If you realize that you have poor communication skills, then you are already halfway there. Take advantage of the numerous resources available at the Chaplain's Office or at the Fleet and Family Support Center. You may also contact the regional Spiritual Fitness Center in order to attend a no cost marriage retreat that primarily focuses on effective communication. Whatever you do, do not become a victim of "communication breakdown."

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## Fallujah Church Service Schedule

### PROTESTANT WORSHIP SERVICES

Sunday:

Protestant Worship 9 a.m. CLB-8 theater

Protestant Communion 9:15 a.m. Base Chapel

Contemporary Worship 10:30 a.m. Base Chapel

Gospel Service 1 p.m. Base Chapel

Latter Day Saints (Mormon) 8:30 a.m. Camp Workhorse

Latter Day Saints (Mormon) 6:30 p.m. Camp Workhorse

### CATHOLIC MASS / CONFESSIONS

Catholic Confession Sun. 7:15 a.m. Base Chapel

Catholic Mass Sun. 8 a.m. Base Chapel

Catholic Mass Mon. 6 p.m. Base Chapel

Catholic Mass Tues. 6 p.m. Base Chapel

Catholic Mass Wed. 6 p.m. Base Chapel

Catholic Mass Thurs. 6 p.m. Base Chapel

Catholic Mass Fri. 6 p.m. Base Chapel

Catholic Confession Sat. 5:15 p.m. Base Chapel

# Iraqi police work toward a better future

**Staff Sgt. Ronna M. Weyland**  
*II Marine Expeditionary Force (FWD)*

SAQALAWIYAH, Iraq -- The room is small and furnished with only a desk, two small sofas and a few file cabinets, but this doesn't stop the police chief here from conducting daily business.

A new Iraqi flag hangs behind his worn desk on a wall desperately in need of repairs. Yet, he selflessly speaks only of his concerns for a safer and better Iraq.

"Baghdad is only 30 miles away, but we are about 70 years behind in growth," said the police chief.

The Saqalawiyah Police are currently working with members of the 6th Civil Affairs Group, 2nd Marine Division, on projects to renovate three local schools and the police station.

There are more than 1,200 Iraqi Police conducting security measures in and around Fallujah.



*Photos by Staff Sgt. Ronna M. Weyland*

A member of the Saqalawiyah Police hands an Iraqi flag to a young boy at Saqalawiyah Primary School for Boys Oct. 10. The Iraqi police passed out backpacks and flags during their visit to the school.



**(Above)** A young boy at Saqalawiyah Primary School for Boys returns to his class after receiving a backpack and Iraqi flag Oct. 10.

**(Left)** A member of the Saqalawiyah Police hands a backpack to a young boy at Saqalawiyah Primary School for Boys Oct. 10.

# Postal brings home to front lines of Iraq

**Sgt. Josh H. Hauser**

*2nd Force Service Support Group (FWD)*

AR RAMADI, Iraq -- It is believed the first pieces of mail in history to be delivered were carried by Persians on horseback as early as 500 B.C. Since then the world has utilized mail delivery for everything from simple correspondence to business transactions totaling untold amounts of money.

The United States Postal Service alone delivers mail to some 350 million Americans and some of the most valued pieces of mail are those received by men and women serving overseas.

For those serving throughout the area of Al Anbar's provincial capital here, receiving mail can take anywhere from one to three weeks, and the Marines assigned to the Ar Ramadi Post Office are in charge of ensuring that each piece of mail gets to its intended recipients.

"Our mission is to support the postal needs of Warfighting Expeditionary Service Teams, Army units and [infantry] located in this area," said Sgt. Addam C. Baker, Ar Ramadi postal chief, 2nd Force Service Support Group (FWD). "Mail is an incredible morale booster. It's so important to have that line of communication with your loved ones when you're so far from them."

A military post office is run exactly the same as any other post office back in the states, but with a twist, according to Baker.

"We're an extension of the U.S. Postal Service and follow their standards," the 26-year-old Witchita, Kan., native said. "However, in order to get mail to our people we have to go to them no matter where they are."

Many know the saying that neither hail, nor sleet, nor rain or snow can stop the postal service from delivering back home, but in today's combat environment, improvised explosive devices and sniper fire can fittingly be added to that list. Baker and his Marines travel regularly to Ar Ramadi's forward operating bases and set up mobile postal units in order to deliver incoming mail and collect letters and parcels from individuals wishing to send items home.

"We also act as a sort of customs agency," Baker said. "There are certain things that are prohibited from being sent through the mail so we have to inspect all parcels being mailed by our customers."

Although items sent through the mail take a little longer than most are used to, receiving a small piece of home is a welcome break from the daily routine for those deployed noted Pfc. Brandon A. Hill, a postal clerk here and 19-year-old native of Aberdeen, Md.

"It's easy to get down out here real quick," said Hill, "but you wouldn't believe how the look on someone's face changes when you hand them a piece of mail."

Having joined the Marine Corps this past January, Hill knows firsthand the stress of rapid deployment and relief of keeping in touch with loved ones at home and letting them know he's okay.

"It's better than I expected here," Hill said. "Back home the news boosts it up to be so bad. There are bad times but there's a lot of good going on here and it's great to be able to share that with family."

Since the beginning of Operation Iraqi Freedom, hundreds of thousands of parcels have passed through the military postal ser-

vices to troops throughout Iraq. Many are from family and friends and many more from fellow Americans who simply wish to say thank you and let the troops know that someone is thinking and praying for them.

"I got a care package from the American Legion in my hometown," said Lance Cpl. Adam J. Westenberg, a 21-year-old Apple Valley, Minn., native and motor transportation mechanic assigned to Task Force Roadrunner, Combat Logistics Battalion 8, 2nd FSSG (FWD). "It was the first package I got since being here. It's motivating to get something in the mail and makes you feel proud to be a part of what's going on here."

America's National Archives are filled with the personal thoughts, emotions and history of our men and women on the front lines dating as far back as the Revolutionary War and in years to come the efforts of service members fighting the Global War on Terrorism will surely find their way into those same halls. Helping to make that happen and ease the minds of service members and those awaiting their return are Marines such as Baker and his men, bringing a piece of home to those serving a world away.



*Sgt. Josh H. Hauser*

Marines and Soldiers work to unload a shipment of mail destined for service members based throughout Ar Ramadi.

# Bulldogs in Iraq ready for any challenge

**Cpl. Cullen J. Tiernan**

*2nd Marine Aircraft Wing (FWD)*

AL ASAD, Iraq -- To protect lives, they devote all their energy, no matter what challenges arise.

The Bulldogs of Marine Attack Squadron 223, 2nd Marine Aircraft Wing (FWD), at Al Asad, Iraq, have flown every scheduled combat mission for more than two months while simultaneously replacing five engines on their AV-8B Harriers, a feat which has required the support of every Marine in the squadron.

"We knew we had to do it," said Gunnery Sgt. Terry Weiser, VMA-223's power line division chief, and Erie, Pa., native. "We aren't training. It's all business here. We simply had to do it to support the ground troops, no question about it."

Weiser's mentality is shared among the Marines at VMA-223. Bulldogs from the different shops volunteered to ensure the engines were replaced and not a single mission was missed.

"If these planes aren't in the air, people die," said Lance Cpl. William Baker, an ordnance technician with VMA-223, and a Joliet, Ill., native. "If we aren't working at ordnance, we are helping other shops. It's about getting it done and the mission accomplished."

The Bulldogs said they have grown accustomed to working for more than 12 hours a day. Most of the Marines are enjoying it and creating lifelong memories, said Baker.

"I love being out here," said Baker. "It's something I'll always remember. I learn something new every day out here. Working so many hours together, people say and do some crazy and funny things. We are always finding clever ways to amuse each other."

Between keeping morale high and working together, each Bulldog shop has their own mission to accomplish.

"The avionics Marines maintain the Harriers' systems, repairing anything electrical on the aircraft," said Lance Cpl. Alexander L. Branson, an ordnance technician with VMA-223. "The airframe Marines work on

the body of the Harrier, the wings and flaps. The power line Marines work on the engine. They all make it fly, the ordnance Marines make it kill."

The ordnance Marines focus on weapons and weapon systems. They have a wide job field and it takes the determined work of every Bulldog to make sure when the pilot presses a little red button, things explode, Branson said.

"We have all gotten a lot closer," said Weiser. "In the rear, we would change five engines in a year. Here, we have accomplished that feat in a month and a half, with an increased amount of flight hours and less people."

Weiser said days before the Bulldogs came here they were collecting Marines from different squadrons. Now, he said it feels like they are all part of the same family and working together for long hours has created a strong bond.

"Knowing what I do saves lives is my motivation," said Lance Cpl. William Hardy, a power line mechanic with VMA-223, and Syracuse, N.Y., native. "I originally

came from a training squadron, and it's amazing being here contributing to the big picture. The big picture to me is protecting the lives of not just Marines but everyone on the ground, including civilians, and taking the lives of the enemy."

Besides repairing and inspecting engines, Hardy said there is always something for him to do and some way for him to help contribute to the big picture.

"Our main focus is to make sure the plane drops ordnance that explodes," said Baker. "We save lives by dropping bombs on snipers, escorting convoys and destroying weapons caches."

The Bulldogs' Harriers also play a role as eyes in the sky, recording what they fly over as well as the precision bombs they drop.

"If they can, the pilots come by and show us the videos," said Baker. "It lets us know we are all doing a good job and doing it correctly. We don't get to see what happens outside the wire, but it feels good inside to see how all our hard work affects what happens out there."



*Cpl. Cullen J. Tiernan*

Corporal Brady Barnett, Pfc. Justin Paine and Pfc. Kevin Haun remove an engine from an AV-8B Harrier at Al Asad, Iraq, Oct. 23. All three Marines are power plant mechanics with Marine Attack Squadron 223.

# Recon Marine fights through injuries, insurgents

**Cpl. Evan M. Eagan**

*II Marine Expeditionary Force (FWD)*

CAMP FALLUJAH, Iraq -- The Marines of Iraqi Army Platoon, Echo Company, 3rd Reconnaissance Battalion, 2nd Marine Division, clashed with insurgents in the month leading up to the unit's relief in place.

Nearing the end of their seven-month deployment and after spending more than a month in Ferris Town and Al Amariyah in support of Operation Southern Fire, Sgt. Joe Gonzalez, platoon sergeant, IA Platoon, was conducting a familiarization foot patrol in Al Amariyah with the incoming team from 1st Reconnaissance Battalion.

On Oct. 2, as the patrol came to a halt in front of Al Amariyah's market area, Gonzalez attempted to stop vehicle traffic on the road running parallel to the market and came face-to-face with the insurgency.

"I was trying to stop the traffic heading in both directions, but a black vehicle kept coming and didn't want to stop," said Gonzalez, a San Antonio native. "I presented my weapon, but I was concerned about taking a shot because of children and other people in the road. But then a kid jumped out in the road and stopped the vehicle."

After stopping, the personnel exited the vehicle and began apologizing to the Marines for not understanding their orders.

Because they posed no immediate threat, little attention was given to the men, who were now standing off to the side of the road.

Moments later Gonzalez became suspicious of the vehicle because, although the men were not in the vehicle, it was still running.

"I noticed the black vehicle was still running, but the personnel were not in it," he said. "I approached the vehicle and looked inside, but it looked clean to me. Then I looked at the passenger side and saw a headdress layed between the seat and floor board. I walked around to the passenger side and picked up the headdress and found an AK-47 with a magazine inserted

and two more magazines on the deck. Obviously something was up."

At this point the occupants of the vehicle made an escape. Gonzalez immediately gave the order to shut down the market, not allowing anyone to enter or leave, and began looking for the most obvious escape route.

"I had a good image of their faces and did a quick search of the area," said the 30-year-old. "I ran by some shops but had no visual on them. I kept looking and saw them a little ways off."

Gonzalez then gave the individuals the order to stop in Arabic, but the men took off in an all out run.

"I gave chase and yelled for them to stop again at which point they turned around in an aggressive posture," he said recalling definitively. "There were three individuals and I put them down."

Continuing to approach the men, two of which were showing no signs of movement, Gonzalez and another Marine realized the third insurgent was not dead.

"As we approached, the third person threw a grenade at us," he said. "It deto-

nated between me and another Marine, exploding in front of me and behind the other Marine. Realizing the severity of the situation, I finished the job."

More Marines and Iraqi soldiers were on the scene and set up a perimeter of security.

"I noticed my legs didn't feel the same," said Gonzalez, who is serving his second tour in support of Operation Iraqi Freedom. "I moved to a covered position and got a better idea of the threat and my injuries. When I looked down, I noticed both legs bleeding. I was unsure of the status of the other Marines and thought I was the only one injured. When I yelled to another Marine he told me he was injured also."

Three Marines and two Iraqi soldiers were injured as a result of the blast.

Gonzalez received shrapnel to both calves and his upper left thigh and was treated by Cpl. Brian Andrews, a vehicle commander in the platoon.

"Immediately I was concerned with Gonzo's [Gonzalez] injuries," said An-

**See Recon, Page 9**



*Cpl. Evan M. Eagan*

Sergeant Joe Gonzalez, platoon sergeant, Iraqi Army Platoon, Echo Company, 3rd Reconnaissance Battalion, 2nd Marine Division, checks the identification cards of Iraqis during an operation in Al Anbar province.

# Maryland native manages transportation web

**Sgt. Ryan S. Scranton**  
*2nd Marine Division*

CAMP BLUE DIAMOND, Iraq -- Lance Cpl. Jason M. Crawford tracks the numerous convoys moving through the Al Anbar province.

As a tactical data network specialist, the 20-year-old Conowingo, Md., native is a bit out of his element. When he volunteered to deploy he imagined himself helping other Marines construct and maintain the 2nd Marine Division's computer network. Instead, he is helping keep Marines in the region safe from both the insurgency and each other.

Convoys here often operate at night and on the dust filled roads friend and foe are not always easily distinguishable. Crawford eliminates the guesswork. With the aid of a tracking system called the

Blue Force Tracker, Crawford can account for every administrative and logistical convoy traveling in the province. He uses the information he gathers from the Global Positioning System to inform other Marines manning checkpoints and guard posts of the convoy's arrival in their area. The information is used to reduce the chance of mistaken identity.

"Anything that comes into our area we have visibility on," Crawford said. "I can track the different convoys and keep Marines manning [observation posts] from shooting at each other. So we can minimize the number of [friendly fire] incidents."

Crawford also uses the information he gathers to help guide Marines away from potential road-side bomb sites and traffic jams. Marines can use the small laptop tracking system to relay known bomb locations and roads with a high volume of vehicle traffic. Crawford then warns other convoys near or heading toward those locations to steer clear of potential threats and bottlenecks.

"When we get word that there was an improvised explosive device explosion or a traffic jam I plot it on the grid," Crawford said. "Then we can see who is in the area, let them know the situation and figure out what actions may be taken to get around it."

Crawford also uses the tracking system to help Marines who have been injured. The device can be used to report insurgent attacks, allowing Crawford and other Marines monitoring the convoy's location to coordinate needed medical support.

"Whenever we can, we try to help coordinate a [medical evacuation]," Crawford said. "It feels good knowing that you get the medical support or information out that they need. It can get hectic when there are a few incidents happening at the same time."

Crawford said he enjoys what he is doing here. The job requires a great deal of computer work, something that he wanted to do when he joined the Marines. He attended Cecil County School of Technology after graduating from Perryville High School in June 2003 before enlisting in the Marine Corps in September. His skills learned at the technical school coupled with his Marine Corps training helped him tremendously.

"I learned a lot at the technical school and my Marine Corps training went hand in hand," Crawford said. "I'm used to doing this kind of work and I like it."

Crawford plans to continue working with computers when he leaves the Marine Corps although he is still not sure when that will be. He believes he's learned a lot from his experience in the Marines and is glad he joined.

"It's taught me how to work under a lot of stress," Crawford said. "It's also taught me how to take charge and get what needs to be done, done."

"The Marine Corps has been good for me. I joined for experience and because I thought I would learn a lot and I have."



*Sgt. Ryan S. Scranton*

Lance Cpl. Jason M. Crawford, tactical data network specialist, with Headquarters Battalion, 2nd Marine Division is helping keep Marines in the region safe from both the insurgency and each other with the aid of the Blue Force Tracker.

# 5/14 MP Bn., gets back in fight

**Cpl. Evan M. Eagan**

*II Marine Expeditionary Force (FWD)*

CAMP FALLUJAH, Iraq – The last time 5th Battalion, 14th Marines, 4th Marine Division, was deployed to a combat zone Franklin D. Roosevelt was president and the United States was in a world war against the Japanese in the South Pacific.

Arriving here in late September after more than 60 years of readiness, the battalion is back in the fight.

Various elements of 5th Bn., 14th Marines, served in support of Operation Desert Storm in the early 1990s, however this marks the first time the whole battalion has deployed to a combat zone since World War II.

Although 5th Bn., 14th Marines, is an artillery unit by trade, they deployed as a provisional military police battalion with Marines coming from various active duty and reserve units throughout the Marine Corps.

“Five-Fourteen is a combination of units,” said Chief Warrant Officer Thomas Tomka, force protection and mobile training team commander, Headquarters Company, Military Police Battalion, 5th Bn., 14th Marines, II Marine Expeditionary Force (FWD). “We have Marines from 1st Battalion, 14th Marines, an active duty MP Company from Camp Pendleton, a TOW Company from 25th Regiment, MP’s from Louisiana and Minnesota, and Marines from 4th Force Reconnaissance from Hawaii and [Reno, Nev.]”

Prior to deploying in support of Operation Iraqi Freedom, the unit came together at Marine Corps Air Ground Combat Center, Twentynine Palms, Calif., for security and stability operations



*Cpl. Evan M. Eagan*

Corporal Joshua Zambrano, 23, a mechanic attached to Headquarters Company, 5th Battalion, 14th Marines, II Marine Expeditionary Force (FWD), from 4th Force Reconnaissance, 4th Marine Division, based in Reno, Nev., works on a humvee at the battalion motor pool.

training and a revised combined arms exercise.

“We spent from June, when we got activated, to September at Twentynine Palms training for this,” said Tomka, a Vietnam and Gulf War veteran. “We got acclimated and trained for this mission and we are motivated.”

The battalion is tasked with four main missions while serving in Iraq: area security, convoy security, law enforcement and operating five detention facilities throughout Al Anbar province, to include the detention facility here.

The battalion is not the first reserve unit to deploy and support a mission with a different military occupational specialty other than their own, however they have laid the ground work for the training of future reserve units with the same mission.

“We met the needs of the Marine Corps by overcoming and adapting our MOS qualifications to meet the mission requirements,” said 1st Sgt. Ronnie Freeman, first sergeant, Headquarters Company, MP Bn., 5th Bn., 14th Marines, II MEF (FWD). “Even though we are all infantry trained, there were still training requirements which needed to be instituted to ensure the success of the mission. We analyzed these deficiencies, developed a training plan and executed the plan with as much realism as training allowed.”

For these Marines, transitioning from an artillery unit to a provisional military police battalion was not as difficult a task as it may have been for other units.

Stacked with civilian law enforcement personnel from various state and federal departments, the battalion was more than ready to accept its new role.

“The mission pulls very heavily from our civilian skills,” said Tomka. “We have law enforcement people and we also have Marines who work for state and federal corrections. This isn’t your normal reserve unit; it’s a very experienced unit.”

For Cpl. Jose Orantes, 26, battalion supply chief, Headquarters Company, MP Bn., 5th Bn., 14th Marines, II MEF (FWD), their mission has been according to plan.

“We have been very effective,” said the Highland Park, Calif., native. “We’re an artillery unit turned MP battalion and we’re doing great. We’re doing the things we need to do to make sure everything goes smooth. I’m up at all hours of the night making sure our guys have the gear they need to effectively carry out all missions.”

Although many units have come together to support 5th Bn., 14th Marines, MP Bn., the Marines have built strong relationships with each other.

“We’re doing everything we need to do to get the mission accomplished,” said Cpl. Lucio Bernabe, 26, the battalion Marine Corps Integrated Maintenance Management System specialist, Headquarters Company, MP Bn., 5th Bn., 14th Marines, II MEF (FWD). “The Marines are very supportive and close knit. We are a very tight knit family.”

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Marine Wing Headquarters Squadron 2's acting sergeant major.

"I am very proud of them because they came from (military occupational fields) that are not groundside related and given a syllabus, they had the best out of three battalions, hands down," said Butler. "Because they came from active and reserve components added to their overall success."

For the Iraqi battalion's culminating training event, they picked the best platoon within their companies and received an unknown mission. During the exercise, the Iraqi soldiers had to clear a booby-trapped building and secure it.

"They found all the booby traps," said Chirico. "On top of that, they showed us they could communicate well."

The true test of how the Wing MiTT compared to others was proven during Operation Liberty Express. The Iraqi soldiers were sent into Hit, where they had to secure a bridge, which had just been blown up by a car bomb. While awaiting repair by Navy Seabees, insurgents used the bridge to attack coalition forces and scuttle back to the other side, said Garland. After repairs were complete, the new Iraqi soldiers secured the bridge and defended it against insurgents the night before the Constitutional Referendum, resulting in their first casualties.

"They experienced the 'fog of war' for the first time," said Garland. "But, an Iraqi lieutenant went on the bridge during the attack and got his wounded off while his soldiers provided suppressive fire. That was a source of pride."

The soldiers also secured a stadium, train station and warehouse and maintained a perimeter defense on each to ensure secure polling sites for the citizens of Hit. Patrols even canvassed the area with minimal supervision to sweep for improvised explosive devices and hand out toys to local Iraqi children and information to potential voters.

"I was extremely hesitant to patrol with them at first," said Army Staff Sgt. Darryl Surette, a Mississippi National Guardsman stationed in Hit. "But, they did a great job. They knew what they were supposed to do and did it."

Their first test as soldiers gave the MiTT a positive feeling as the voter turnout increased significantly from the Jan. 30 elections, said Garland.

After elections and the removal of all poll workers, each of the election sites became a hotbed of activity. Yet, the new soldiers eagerly and willingly stepped up to the plate and defended their positions against the enemy, said Hingle.

## Recon, from Page 6

draws, an Austin, Texas, native. "All I saw was his cammies with blood all over them. At the time security was the number one priority. Once we guaranteed security, I found as much cover as we could get and evaluated his wounds."

Gonzalez and the other injured personnel were treated for their wounds and once reinforcements arrived, conducted a foot patrol back to their firm base.

"The bottom line is he saw a situation develop and he did what he had to do," said Andrews. "His actions were right on."

According to Gonzalez, this incident was typical of the insurgency in Iraq.

"Everything about them [insurgents] exudes cowardice," he said. "They are never willing to face us and when they do they get put in their place. This was a great demonstration of power for the Iraqi soldiers. They were just as dedicated as the Marines were, and they were injured just

First Battalion is still in Hit, dug in for the long haul. Though they will be working with the Mississippi National Guard, the goal is for them to completely police the city, said Chirico.

Throughout the training, the Iraqis and the Marines formed bonds the MiTT hopes will keep them focused.

"There were some very personal relationships made with the Iraqis we worked with, both civilian and military," said Hingle. "We shared stories of families, hometowns and experiences. Nicknames were assigned on both sides. Our translators begged to deploy with us. The ones who didn't requested we make sure they could at least only work with Marines for the new cycle. We will definitely keep in contact with some."

Although every Marine is known to be a rifleman, the Wing MiTT showed they are capable of developing a battalion of Iraqis as well trained, if not better, than an infantry unit's MiTT, said Butler.

Chirico credits this to his noncommissioned officers.

"Everyone on the team believed in it one way, shape or form," said Chirico. "The NCOs were key and the most consistent. They were the backbone and always showed an incredible amount of teamwork, no matter what was on their collars."



Staff Sgt. Brenda L. Varnadore

Iraqi soldiers from the 1st Battalion, 2nd Brigade of the 7th Iraqi Army Division pass out toys to children and hand out information on the Iraqi Constitutional Referendum while on patrol in Hit, Iraq, Oct. 14.

as we were. It was a good day for the Iraqi Army."

Gonzalez is currently redeploying back to the states and is looking forward to being with his family.

"I've been married for nine years," he said before leaving Camp Fallujah early this month. "My daughter is five-years-old. Whatever I do over here is highly influenced by my wife. I'm looking forward to spending time with both of them."