

THE EAGLE & CRESCENT

WITH THE MARINES IN IRAQ

VOL. 1 - EDITION 1

MARCH 23, 2006

I MEF returns, takes charge in Al Anbar

CPL. JON C. GUIBORD

I Marine Expeditionary Force (Forward)

CAMP FALLUJAH, Iraq - The Marine command that spearheaded combat operations in Iraq in 2003 assumed responsibility for training Iraqi Security Forces in western Iraq during a transfer-of-authority ceremony, February 28, 2006.

First Marine Expeditionary Force (Forward) took charge of the Al Anbar Province from the North Carolina-based II Marine Expeditionary Force (Forward).

The ceremony officially relieved the II MEF command of its Multi-National Force - West title and bestowed the California-based I MEF with the new job. Commanded by Maj. Gen. Richard C. Zilmer, I MEF (Forward) commanding general, MNF-W is composed of active and reserve Marine, Army, and Navy units from throughout the United States.

"I am here to tell you that I MEF is ready to assume our position as part of this great force," said the Reading, Penn., native and graduate of Kutztown University, Penn.

I MEF spent the past year preparing for its current deployment to Iraq by training in the Southern California coastal base Camp Pendleton, Calif., and Marine Combined Air Ground Combat Center in 29 Palms, Calif., located in the Mojave Desert.

Zilmer and Sgt. Maj. Thomas H. Howard, I MEF (Forward) sergeant major, unfurled the unit's colors carried by an MNF-W color guard, which included an Iraqi soldier, during the small courtyard ceremony attended by



Cpl. Jon C. Guibord

Major Gen. Richard C. Zilmer, commanding general I Marine Expeditionary Force (Forward), speaks to a crowd of guests at Camp Fallujah, Iraq, Feb. 28, 2005. The speech was made minutes after unfurling the I MEF (Forward) colors and taking command of Multi-National Force -- West in the Al Anbar Province during a transfer of authority ceremony.

Army Gen. George W. Casey Jr., Multi-National Force - Iraq commanding general, and Army Lt. Gen. Peter W. Chiarelli, Multi-National Corps - Iraq commanding general. The unfurling of I MEF's colors and battle streamers symbolized the transfer of authority.

During his brief comments, Zilmer noted the accomplishments of II MEF (Forward) and 2nd Marine Division commanding general Maj. Gen. Richard A. Huck and his Marines and Sailors, who returned to the U.S. last week.

"It is an honor to follow your lead," Zilmer said to Huck. "We have watched from afar for the last year...the great work (you and your team) have done. You have written new pages in the history of the 2nd Marine Division."

Throughout 2005, MNF-W while under II MEF's command, conducted major operations, such as Steel Curtain in November, and provided security during the Iraqi national elections in December 2005.

See TOA Page 9

INSIDE THE E&C

- | | |
|---|------------------------------|
| 1- I MEF TOA | 7- 3/1 FINDS WEAPONS |
| 2- COMMANDER'S MESSAGE TO FAMILIES & BRIEFS | 8- WOUNDED |
| 3- CHAPLAIN'S CORNER | 9- CAG TOA |
| 4- ESAPI | 10- FATHER/ SON UNITE AT TQ |
| 5- 3/5 MEMORIAL | 11- WARRIOR'S WORDS/ CLB TOA |
| 6- PAGE SIX PROFILE | 12- SNAP SHOTS |

5 DAY FORECAST

Thur	Fri	Sat	Sun	Mon
78 56	82 54	87 60	88 60	86 62

Commander's Message to Families

Hello from the Al Anbar Province of Iraq. This is Major General Rick Zilmer, the Commanding General of I Marine Expeditionary Force (Forward.) Over the past couple of weeks, Marines have been moving into theater and preparing to do their part in restoring sovereignty to the nation of Iraq. Our force deployed safely and we were warmly received by II Marine Expeditionary Force (Forward.)

The weather is still cool and dry but the temperature is slowly rising. The Marines are focused on their task. They are becoming familiar with their areas of operation and getting to know and understand their counterparts in the Iraqi Army - who they will train and fight with over the course of the next year.

Our main mission is to develop the Iraqi Security Forces in the Al Anbar Province. Accomplishment of this mission in coordination with the development of the rule of law and

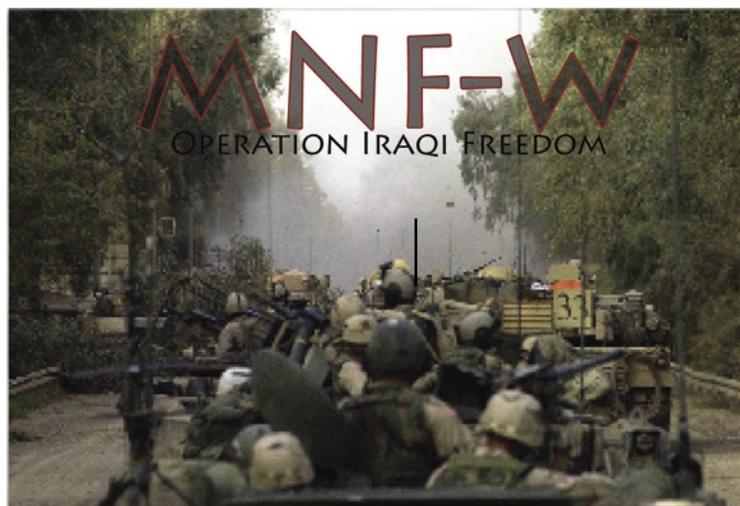


Maj. Gen. Richard C. Zilmer
Commanding General
MNF-W

a market based economy will place the future of Iraqi freedom squarely in the Iraqi people's capable hands. We have a very important, yet difficult mission. The Marines are extremely capable and I have no doubts that we will be successful. This morning marked the transfer of authority from II Marine Expeditionary Force (Forward) to I Marine Expeditionary Force (Forward.)

From this date on, the men and women of I MEF (Fwd) will need your continued love and support to guide them through the challenges and victories that will mark their time here. I ask for your help in keeping their focus on the mission and I thank you for your constant support. Please keep us in your thoughts and prayers and continue to write, email, and MOTOMAIL.

The next update will come to you from Sergeant Major Howard, the I MEF (Fwd) Sergeant Major. Until then, take care on the home front and Semper Fidelis.



THERE ARE NO
ADMIN MOVEMENTS
ALL MOVEMENTS ARE
COMBAT OPERATIONS

IEDS KILL



STAY ALIVE

BRIEFS

Need Legal Support?

Applications for naturalization of a U.S. citizen/ passport services/ powers of attorney/ notary services/ tax issues/ wills/ family support issues/ separation agreements/ divorce/ servicemembers civil rights act/ USERRA guidance/ creditor, debt collector issues/ consumer protection consultation or all other personal legal matters contact Legal Services Support Team – Iraq @ 3422-121 or email

Raul.Dominguez@cssemnf.wiraq.usmc.mil

Tobacco cessation program

All personnel that are interested will attend an orientation mtg on 29 Mar 06. Time and place TBD. Sign-up NLT 26 Mar 06 at GAS front desk or call 3640-715. Personnel may also e-mail HMCS Tolosa, Renato for more information or to sign-up. At the orientation, personnel can choose a self-paced program with or without medication or choose to attend smoking cessation classes, also with or without medication at the preference of the member.

AKO Individual Medical Readiness (IMR) and Immunization Record

On 4 January 2006, the MEDPROS Team modified the AKO Medical Readiness Alerts to include a link for Soldiers to view their Individual Medical Readiness (IMR) and Immunization Record (DD Form 2766C). Soldiers who find incorrect or blank data in their records can contact their nearest MEDPROS Data Entry representative to have their information corrected/updated.

Camp Fallujah

MWR events

Dominoes: Thur. @2000
 Chess Tournament Fri. @2030
 5/10k fun run Sat. @0800
 Jazz night: Sun. @2130
 Board game night Tue. @2000
 Backgammon Wed. @2000

*Movie Night: Daily @ MWR facility 2000
 For more information, contact

crystal.nadeau@halliburton.com

A message to The Eagle & Crescent readers

The Eagle & Crescent is a publication made for the Marines in Iraq, by the Marines in Iraq of the 1st Marine Expeditionary Force. We appreciate your interest, prayers and patriotic support.

Semper Fidelis,

BECOME A SUBSCRIBER:

If you don't receive The Eagle & The Crescent directly, and would like to, please send an e-mail to EagleandCrescent@cemnf-wiraq.usmc.mil. Just put Subscribe in the subject line and we'll add you to our e-mail distribution list.

I Marine Expeditionary Force (FWD)

Commanding General, Maj. Gen. Richard C. Zilmer
 Sergeant Major, Sgt. Maj. Thomas H. Howard

Public Affairs Director...Lt. Col. Bryan F. Salas

Deputy Director.....Maj. Ricco T. Player

Public Affairs Chief.....Master Sgt. John A. Cordero

Media Officer.....Capt. Megan M. McClung

Press Chief.....GySgt. Timothy A. Streaty

Editor/Combat Correspondent...Cpl. Jon C. Guibord

Correspondents from throughout the military contribute to this publication. The views and opinions expressed are not necessarily those of the Department of Defense. It is for information only and is not considered directive in nature.

CHAPEL OF HOPE SERVICE SCHEDULE

Friday- Jewish Sabbath Service -	1830
1st & 3rd Friday	
Saturday- Catholic Confessions	1700
Catholic Vigil Mass	1800
Sunday- Catholic Mass	0800
Protestant Communion Service	0915
Protestant Contemporary Service	1030
Gospel Service	1300
Lutheran Services	1830
Monday - Friday	
Catholic Confessions	1700
Catholic Daily Mass	1800
(Blessed Sacrament Chapel)	

Chaplain's Corner

LIVING IN DENIAL



Chaplain (CAPT USN) Bill Purdue
MNF-W Chaplain

Our lives have certainly changed over the last few weeks, haven't they? We kissed the family and Taco Bell goodbye, said farewell to our beverage of choice and "slipt the surly bonds of Earth" for a dusty and dangerous mission half a world away. They say confession is good for the soul, so here's mine: I'm in denial! I probably have been for about two weeks before I departed.

My wife, Susan, could tell. I could, too. We were about to separate for 12 months, but we were acting as if life would never change. We were in blissful denial. Yes, we checked off everything on the predeployment list, but we avoided the painful reality that separation was coming.

I arrived in theater and hit the ground running, working 15 hours a day; but the truth is that underneath it all, I'm probably still in denial and probably will be for a few more weeks. My wife and family are, too! I expect soon to start feeling numb and a little aimless. Perhaps I'll be a little lonely and a bit disorganized.

You see, I'm just following the emotional emotional script! I can't help it. I'm human. And so are you. All of us in Iraq need to face the fact that we have begun the emotional cycle of deployment. The good news is, when you begin to feel emotionally disorganized, you're already in Stage three—a stage that will last through the first few weeks of deployment. You've already made it through stage one—anticipation of loss and stage two—detachment and withdrawal. Stage four begins when the

"So don't be surprised, fellow humans, about everything going on in your heart and head. The shock will pass and we will thrive."

Chaplain (CAPT USN) Bill Purdue

numbness wears off and you get stabilized into a routine. You feel self-confident and know that you can survive.

So don't be surprised, fellow humans, about everything going on in your heart and head. The shock will pass and we will thrive. In the meantime, make friends, work hard, call your family, email regularly. Do something sacrificial for someone else today. Work on your spiritual life by focusing on those things that give you meaning and purpose. And don't forget, above all, to have faith. As sacred scripture declares, "God is our refuge and strength, an ever-present help in trouble. Therefore, we will not fear...." (Psalm 46)

PRAYER FOR MARINES

Righteous God, you rule the nations. Guard brave men and women who risk themselves in battle for their country, and for the vision of peace on earth you placed in their hearts. Give them compassion for enemies who fight not for a nation, but for a vision of a world that uses evil means and seeks oppressive goals. Keep our sons and daughters from hate that hardens, but equip them to do the job that must be done.

While this prayer is offered for all who serve, remember especially those dear to us serving with the I Marine Expeditionary Force. Keep those who go outside the wire safe and ready to stand up for righteousness in evil surroundings.

Keep those who remain in camp safe, but also aware of the danger their comrades face each day.

Keep from complacency both those who don't see the constant danger, and those who have seen it for so long they are dulled to it. Though they must be at war, let them live for peace, as eager to help the Iraqi people as they are to have victory over terrorists.

Encourage them as they encourage one another, and never let hard duty or the horrors of war separate them from faith in you as

Creator. Sustainer and Savior. Amen.

Marines in Iraq have all sides covered

CPL. WILLIAM SKELTON
1st Battalion, 1st Marine Regiment

CAMP FALLUJAH, Iraq (Feb. 23, 2006) -- Marines walking the beat in Fallujah are now covered on all sides, thanks to new armor and ballistic plates added to their vests. Still, the new gear is getting mixed reviews.

Marines with Regimental Combat Team 5 recently received their side body armor plates, called small-arms protective inserts, or SAPI. The added armor, made of the same materials as the chest and back plates, was generated

after Marine Corps officials commissioned a study and found some combat deaths might have been prevented if the ceramic armor plates extended to the sides of the torso.

The added armor has some Marines singing its praises and others grumbling. The added protection is welcomed by Marines who expose themselves to gunfire and roadside improvised explosive devices. But the added weight, even at over just a couple pounds apiece, is causing some Marines to wonder if the loss of mobility is worth the protection.

Marines assigned to 1st Battalion, 1st Marine Regiment, serving with RCT-5 near Fallujah, were among the first to receive their side SAPIs. They are mandatory for each Marine to wear. Orders here are clear about personal protection.

Marines leaving the wire wear chest and back SAPI plates, along with the new side plates. Groin protectors, collars and

neck protectors are required at all times, in addition to ballistic eye protection and fire-retardant gloves. Marines manning machine guns in humvee turrets also wear ballistic protection for shoulders, arms and legs.

"Side SAPIs are designed to protect a Marine's sides where the normal ak jacket plates don't cover," said Maj. Bill Wischmeyer, the 39-year-old battalion executive officer from San Diego.

The plates are designed to stop a bullet from penetrating and injuring Marines and sailors

gear," said Luman, assigned to Headquarters and Service Company.

"It's easy to take on and off and most importantly they protect your sides when before there was nothing there."

Marines recently demonstrated to Congress that with each added layer of protection, they sacrifice mobility they desperately need fighting in an urban environment. Here, on the battlefield, those same questions still linger.

"A normal ak jacket only has a pocket for the front and rear plates," said Pfc. Caleb

assigned to Company C. "The plates dangle low and get in the way a lot."

Wischmeyer explained that Marine commanders owed it to their Marines to use innovation and all available means to protect their forces. Insurgents in Iraq are constantly adapting their tactics, and gaps in the protective equipment were specifically targeted.

"Are they heavy? Yes," he added. "Do they make the vest heavier? Yes. Is there a lot of armor on that thing? Yes, but the bottom line is we owe it to the

Marines to provide what ever gear we can to protect them."

Wischmeyer explained that Marine commanders owed it to their Marines to use innovation and all available means to protect their forces. Insurgents in Iraq are constantly adapting their tactics.

"The enemy adapts to our armor, so we constantly have to come up with better, more efficient ways to protect our Marines," Wischmeyer said.

"Are they heavy? Yes," he added. "Do they make the vest heavier? "The bottom line is we owe it to the Marines to provide what ever gear we can to protect them."



Cpl. William Skelton

Lance Cpl. Colt J. Luman, 1st Battalion, 1st Marine Regiment serving with Regimental Combat Team 5, holds up a pair of side small-arms protective inserts, SAPIs recently issued to improve, survivability. Still, some Marines harbor concerns about loss of mobility.

in firefights. Evidence exists of Marines who were shot in their chest SAPI plates, with nothing more than a bruise to show for it.

Lance Cpl. Colt J. Luman, a 22-year-old from Farmington, N.M., said he's a fan of the added protection. He doesn't think it adds too much weight and balances out well with the rest of the vest.

"They're good pieces of

M. Medley," a 19-year-old infantryman with Company C and Burlington, Colo. resident. "The new side SAPIs have to be snapped into the sides of the already heavy ak."

Pfc. Xeeng Y. Lee, a 20-year-old infantryman from Syracuse, N.Y., had his own concerns about the side SAPIs.

"The gear is a lot heavier with the side plates on," said Lee,

Cpl. William Skelton is a Combat Correspondent serving with 1st Battalion, 1st Marine Regiment in the Al Anbar Province. For information email him at SkeltonWB@gcemnf-wiraq.usmc.mil

'Darkhorse' pauses, remembers its fallen

CPL. MARK SIXBEY

3rd Battalion, 5th Marine Regiment

CAMP SMITTY, Iraq (Feb. 22, 2006)

-- Marines of Company I, 3rd Battalion, 5th Marine Regiment, Regimental Combat Team 5 gathered here to remember two fallen men Monday, Feb. 20.

Cpl. Ross A. Smith, a fire team leader, and Pfc. Javier Chavez Jr., a rifleman, both with 1st Squad, 2nd Platoon, Company I, were killed by hostile action Feb. 9 in the Al Anbar Province. So far, the company has lost three Marines.

"There are no words I can say that will relieve the hurt that the Smith's, Chavez's and we feel," said Lt. Col. Patrick G. Looney, the 43-year-old battalion commander from Oceanside, Calif. "But what I can offer is that these warriors gave their lives doing what they chose to do. My sincerest condolences go out to the Smith and Chavez families for their great loss."

Portraits of Smith and Chavez rested alongside their boots, rifles, identification tags and Kevlar helmets, before the U.S. and Marine Corps flags. The company stood in formation as their close friends and squad members read prayers and reflected on their friendships with the two men.

Lance Cpl. Joshua B. Tallis, an infantryman with 2nd Platoon knew Smith since they arrived together to their platoon. "You could always tell his presence, always loud, always happy," said Tallis, 21, from Los Angeles. "His platoon is going to miss their brother."

He said it was Smith's third deployment to Iraq. He was 21 years old.

"He was going to get out and take over his father's business," Tallis said.



Cpl. Mark Sixbey

Lance Cpl. Joshua B. Tallis, Company I, 3rd Battalion, 5th Marine Regiment, kneels in front of the memorial of Cpl. Ross Smith and Pfc. Javier Chavez Jr., who were killed in action Feb. 9, 2006. The company held a memorial service at Camp Smitty, Iraq, Feb. 20.

Smith is survived by his mother and father in Detroit.

Chavez, from Fresno, Calif., was born Dec. 31, 1986 and recently married Janie Chavez, 19.

"Those of us who knew Javier are better for having known him," said Lance Cpl Pierce Ford, a 22-year-old infantryman Colorado Springs, Colo.

"Like Corporal Smith, he was an avid athlete, and an excellent student," Looney added. "He was also a loving husband, a son, and a brother."

Ford said Chavez always put his family first, going home to see them every chance he had.

"He was dedicated to his family," said Ford, 20. "He'd be the first to step up if somebody was being picked on. My prayers go out to his family. He's in a better place now."

Ford, who knew Chavez since their days at the School of Infantry, said that Chavez planned to use his experience in the Marine Corps as a stepping-stone into a career in law enforcement.

"We pretty much did everything together since we met," Ford explained. "He cared about his family, and he was like a brother to me." Pfc. Mack McSperitt, from 2nd Platoon knew Chavez since they were classmates in the 7th grade.

"He's a childhood friend," said McSperitt, a 19-year-old from Hanford, Calif. "He knew what he wanted to do. He joined the Corps to become a better person, to learn honor, courage and commitment."

"He stood up for what he believed in," he said. "I'm very sorry for the loss of your son. It's hard, but he fought to the end. You should be proud."



Cpl. Mark Sixbey

Lance Cpl Cody Turpen, an infantryman with 2nd Platoon, Company I, salutes the memorial of Cpl. Ross Smith and Pfc. Javier Chavez Jr., at a memorial service at Camp Smitty, Iraq, Feb. 20.

Cpl. Mark Sixbey is a Combat Correspondent serving with 3rd Battalion, 5th Marine Regiment in the Al Anbar Province. For information email him at SixbeyMA@gcemnf-wiraq.usmc.mil

PAGE 6
PROFILE

**“THE
REPRO
GUY”**



SSGT. TIMOTHY C. MCMANN

AGE: 30

HOMETOWN: Alachua, FL (near Gainesville)

MARITAL STATUS: Married, 10 years

KIDS: (2) Daughter – Marissa, 8 yrs old Son – Patrick, 4 yrs old

MOS: 4612-Offset Lithographer, I MEF (FWD)
Combat Camera Chief

UNIT/DUTY STATION: 1st Marine Division, Combat Camera, IA to I MEF/ Camp Fallujah, Iraq

FAVORITE HANGOUT: Home, in the back yard BBQ'ing

HOBBIES: Golf

LAST SONG OR MOVIE DOWNLOADED: Kenny Chesney “ Be As You Are” and Pulp Fiction. I need iTunes though so I can download new stuff for my iPod.

LAST BOOK YOU READ: The Magnificent Bastards

FAVORITE MRE: BBQ Pork with Rice or Chili Mac

WHAT HAVE YOU LEARNED DURING DEPLOYMENT: Other aspects of the Combat Camera field, such as photo and video production

WHAT WILL YOU REMEMBER MOST: The song “Susie Q” by Creedence Clearwater Revival blasting through the speakers on the flightline as we arrived at TQ.

WHERE ARE YOU GOING ON VACATION WHEN YOU REDEPLOY: Disney Cruise with my wife and kids.

WORST PART ABOUT DEPLOYMENT: Leaving family and friends

WHAT DOES YOUR FAMILY THINK ABOUT YOUR DEPLOYMENT: They support it 100%.

BEST & WORST MEMORY OF MARINE CORPS:

“When I was first given my EGA for the garrison cover for the Service Alphas two days before graduating boot camp. Bad - I try to forget any of the bad memories.

FAVORITE COMEDIAN: Any Redneck Comedy Hour guys, George Lopez or Kings of Comedy.

FAVORITE DUTY STATION: 1st Marine Division, Camp Pendleton, Calif.

First stepped on the yellow footprints: Aug. 7th 1994.

WHAT WILL YOU BE DOING IN 5 YEARS: Finalizing my retirement plans.

ADVICE FOR OTHERS HERE: “Take it one day at a time and try to stay positive.”

Piece of equipment you can't live without: Leatherman.

Pendleton Marines work to hand over clean AO

CPL. ADAM C. SCHNELL
3rd Battalion, 1st Marine Regiment

KHAFFAJIYAH, Iraq (Feb. 26, 2006) -- Marines in the Haditha Dam region continued to keep insurgents on their heels during another counterinsurgency operation here Feb. 26.

The latest operation, dubbed "Minotaur," was aimed at clearing more than nine kilometers of riverbank and several small villages south of Haqlaniyah – a town along the Euphrates River in Al Anbar Province, northwest of Baghdad.

Although this is usually an inactive area, the Marines said

they want to leave no stone unturned in their quest to hunt down insurgents.

"The quiet places are where the insurgents feel safe to hide," said Staff Sgt. Jacob M. Geary, platoon sergeant for Weapons Platoon, Company I, 3rd Battalion, 1st Marine Regiment. Geary's platoon spearheaded the operation. "If they (insurgents) are hiding here and using it as a planning site, we want to show them we will be around to disrupt their plans."

The Camp Pendleton, Calif.-based Marines have spent almost six months in Iraq's western Al Anbar Province conducting counter-insurgency operations and

providing stability to the "Triad" area of Haqlaniyah, Barwanah and Haditha.

Operation Minotaur focused on Khaffajiyah and southern outlying areas including the island

of Alus. The Marines went house-to-house looking for insurgents and used metal detectors to sweep the river bank for weapons caches.

"We just wanted to throw something different at them," said Geary, a Helmville, Mont., native. "They see mounted troops, but it isn't very often they see dismounted Marines go to their homes and search the area."

Approximately six weeks ago, the Marines swept through the area and found numerous weapons caches buried along the river bank. This prompted the battalion to continue to sweep through this area, maintaining a vigilant presence to remind insurgents that there is no place to hide.

"If we continue to operate in these areas, they will never get a chance to execute [their] plans," said 1st Lt. Jared W. Burgess, a platoon leader with the company's Weapons Platoon.

During the next month or so, the battalion will be gradually replaced with another Marine infantry unit. The Marines want to leave this once insurgent-heavy area in good shape for the new unit, the Hawaii-based 3rd Battalion, 3rd

Marine Regiment, said Burgess.

"It's good that we do one more sweep of this area before turning it over," said Lance Cpl. Lawrence A. Parkhill, a 20-year-old team

"If we continue to operate in these areas, they will never get a chance to execute [their] plans."

1st Lt. Jared W. Burgess

leader from Temecula, Calif.

While the Marines' focus is on disrupting insurgent activity and further training Iraqi soldiers, thoughts of home are beginning to surface. For Parkhill, his thoughts turn to riding his motorcycle in southern California. Like many of the Marines, he is focused on the job at hand, but thinks more and more about the loved ones waiting for him and the hobbies he has missed since arriving here nearly six months ago.

"I miss the sunny weather in California and just cruising around with my girlfriend on my bike," said Parkhill.

Even though the Marines are nearing the end of their time in Iraq, the battalion shows no signs of slowing down their hunt for insurgents. They'll continue actively seeking out anti-Iraqi forces and paving a path for their replacements' success.

The battalion's redeployment to the U.S. is part of a regularly scheduled rotation of forces in Al Anbar. More than 25,000 Marine and sailors of Camp Pendleton, Calif.-based I Marine Expeditionary Force are replacing the Camp Lejeune, N.C.-based II MEF.

Cpl. Adam C. Schnell is a Combat Correspondent serving with 3rd Battalion, 1st Marine Regiment in western Iraq. For more information email him at SchnellAC@gcmmnf-wiraq.usmc.mil



Cpl. Adam C. Schnell

Lance Cpl. Patrick D. Guild, a Oshkosh, Wis., native digs for a possible hidden weapons cache while Lance Cpl. Casey W. Beeman a Fort Worth, Texas native, assists with a metal detector. Both Marines, infantrymen with Company I, 3rd Battalion, 1st Marine Regiment, were looking for hidden weapons caches in Alus, Iraq, during Operation Minotaur Feb. 26, 2006.

Marine survives gunshot, defeats attackers

LANCE CPL. CHRISTOPHER J. ZAHN

2nd Battalion, 6th Marine Regiment

FALLUJAH, Iraq (Feb. 23, 2006) -- For some Marines, strenuous hours of training is simply mind over matter. In combat, one Marine proved its Matter over mind.

Sgt. John T. Matter, a 26-year-old squad leader from Milwaukee, Wis., survived a blast from an improvised explosive device and two separate gunshot wounds to run a wounded Marine to safety and lead his Marines out of the kill zone here Dec. 12.

Recently, he and the Marines he fought alongside spoke of the day Matter put it in his mind he wouldn't die. Marines from Company E, 2nd Battalion, 6th Marine Regiment, serving with Regimental Combat Team 8, were performing a reconnaissance patrol in Fallujah to find a patrol base where they could support the upcoming elections.

"We arrived at an abandoned hospital and Sgt. Matter and I examined the building," explained 2nd Lt. Jeffery M. Frederick, a 24-year-old from Detroit who is Matter's platoon commander. "We determined that it would not be a good choice ... we were ready to leave the building. I told Sgt. Matter to start pushing his guys outside."

Matter told his first fire team, led by Lance Cpl. Jeffrey M. Roberts, a 20-year-old from Destin, Fla., to move out of the building. Just as Roberts moved his team of Marines, one pointed out five teenagers pointing in their direction and running away.

"He also reported that all the shops on the street had closed," Roberts recalled. "I stepped outside and pointed the kids out to Sgt. Matter who was right behind me."

"It was then an improvised explosive device blew up just 15 feet away. Shrapnel and dust filled the air. Two of the Marines were immediately struck by fragments of the bomb, Matter in the face, and Lance Cpl. John W. Conlee in the face and upper thighs. The situation rapidly grew worse. Gunfire poured in through the smoke."

"Right after the explosion we started getting hosed down with automatic weapons fire from across the street," Matter explained. "I went back inside to get a better grasp on the situation. The first fire team was pinned down by fire and couldn't get back inside."

With Marines trapped outside, Matter knew he had to do something. He looked to his M-203 grenade launcher.

"I stepped out to shoot a round from my M-203 at the building where the fire was coming from," he said. "I got the round off but as I was

shooting I got shot in the leg."

Despite the wound, Matter was able to see his grenade launched against the attackers had effect.

"It worked though," he said. "Doing that gave the guys time to get back inside. Once we had everybody back inside we started to lay down some heavy suppressive fire to gain fire superiority. I moved to take another 203 shot and I got shot again, this time in the neck."

"The bullets in his leg and neck didn't deter Matter at all. He continued to provide suppressing fire along with the second fire team led by Cpl. Joshua J. Frazier, 23-year-old from Spotsylvania, Va. Frazier admitted he was in a sense of awe of Matter, even as rounds zipped past and Marines fought to repel their attackers."

"It was a relief to see him still going," Frazier said. "I saw him get shot in the leg but he stayed on his feet and stayed in the fight."

"Once everyone was back in the house the squad regrouped and assessed casualties."

"I was behind Sgt. Matter when the IED went off," said 1st Lt. James G. King, the 26-year-old company executive officer from Washington D.C. "I got knocked down, saw one guy firing at us and took him down. I saw one Marine - Lance Cpl. Michael D. Copley

- was hit so I dragged him into the house and began performing first aid on him. After doing that I grabbed Matter and treated his various injuries."

Matter's cool head continued to prevail amongst the confusion and lingering threats.

"At some point we all noticed that Copley had gotten shot in the back of the leg and was bleeding pretty bad," Matter said. "We didn't know where the bullet had gone after it hit him. I knew that we had to move Copley to the medevac vehicles that had arrived."

Roberts explained he tried to pull Copley's trousers back up before they rushed him to the waiting vehicles, but he couldn't lift up Copley's body weight. Matter stepped in, ignoring his own wounds and told him to throw Copley over his shoulders.

"Instead of having a humvee pull up in front of the building and have them at greater risk of being shot, I picked Copley up over my shoulders and ran with him to the medevac vehicles," Matter said. "I figured I had a better chance because I was a smaller target."

Matter rejoined his squad to find...

————— See Wounded, Page 9



Lance Cpl. Christopher J. Zahn

Sgt. John T. Matter, a 26-year-old squad leader from Milwaukee, Wis., looks through his sights during a patrol Feb. 23. He is a squad leader with Company E, 2nd Battalion, 6th Marine Regiment currently deployed to Fallujah, Iraq, with Regimental Combat Team 5. On the morning of Dec. 12, Matter was engaged by insurgents in a firefight that left him wounded, but still standing.

Wounded, from Page 8

reinforcements arrived. A quick-reaction force of Combined Anti-Armor Team and Fleet Anti-Terrorism Security Team joined in the fight. Matter was ready to fight his way out with his Marines until his first sergeant ordered him to the medevac vehicles.

"I'll be honest, at that point I was hurting and while I still could have fought, I needed medical treatment pretty bad myself," he said.

Frederick credited Matter's calm and stoic reactions throughout the firefight to keeping the Marines alive.

"He was doing exactly what was expected," Frederick said.

"He took care of all the small details so that

I could coordinate our medevac and QRF. He kept me updated throughout the fight. Without his leadership that day things could have been a lot worse."

Matter was more humble and saved his praise for his squad.

"Those guys did not hesitate at all," he said. "They reacted exactly the way they had been trained and did what they had to do. The insurgents started the fight and we definitely finished it."

Two months later, Matter has recovered from his wounds, as has Lance Cpl. Conlee. Lance Cpl. Copley has returned to the United States and is undergoing extensive physical

therapy. The firefight remains vivid in the Marines' minds, and is a constant reminder that all the work invested in training is well worth it.

"Without even realizing it we all relied on our training," Roberts said. "We were doing combat reloads, bounding maneuvers and pointing out targets to each other."

Lance Cpl. Zahn is a Combat Correspondent serving with 2nd Battalion, 6th Marine Regiment in the Al Anbar Province. For more information email him at ZahnCJ@gcemnf-wiraq.usmc.mil

Soldiers assist Marines with defensive operations

CPL. DANIEL J. REDDING

1st Marine Logistics Group

CAMP TAQADDUM, Iraq (Mar. 12, 2006) -- Soldiers from 2nd Battalion, 130th Infantry Regiment performed a multi-faceted mission near Camp Taqaddum, Iraq, March 12, as they carried out weapons cache sweeps, investigated possible improvised explosive devices and conducted route clearance operations during the daylong operation.

Along the way, the Illinois-based National Guard unit took time to interact with the locals, stopping in local villages around the base.

The soldiers' primary mission is to provide base security for the Marines and sailors of the forward-deployed 1st Marine Logistics Group. The 4,200 joint-service members of 1st MLG are part of the 25,000 Marines, airmen, soldiers and sailors of the 1st Marine Expeditionary Force's forward deployed element.

The 1st MLG's mission is to provide sustained logistics support to I MEF and Iraqi security forces operating in the Al Anbar province of Iraq. Marines with 1st MLG will also support the development of the Iraqi Security Forces' logistic capabilities in order to enable independent ISF led counter insurgency operations.

During their mission, the soldiers were acquainting themselves with the routes in their newly assigned area to ensure the safety of the roads for future convoys, said Staff Sgt. Thomas D. Reif, convoy patrol leader and 37-year-old native of Raymond, Ill.

To clear a route for future convoys the soldiers scan the roads for possible signs of makeshift bombs called improvised explosive devices.

The IEDs are manufactured in a variety of ways with a variety

of explosives, and have been one of the leading causes of casualties for troops in Iraq. While on this patrol a suspicious mound of dirt drew the soldiers' attention - a possible IED. After close inspection of the surrounding area with no results, it was decided that the mound of dirt was just that - a mound of dirt.

Later in the day, after they conducted the route clearing and terrain association mission, the soldiers stopped in two local towns to pass out stuffed animals, candy and toothbrushes to the Iraqi children. Although their primary mission was defensive patrols against the insurgency, the soldiers frequently interacted with the Iraqis, lightening the mood of their operations.

The soldiers were grateful it wasn't business as usual and could do something a little light hearted. Whether it's handing out candy or searching for IEDs, the soldiers are proud of what they are doing in Iraq, said Sgt. 1st Class Timothy J. Atteberry, platoon sergeant.

"The individual, personal satisfaction of helping another human being really comes from these kinds of humanitarian-aid type missions," said Atteberry, a 38-year-old native of Champagne, Ill.

While the day ended with no weapons caches or IEDs discovered, it was ultimately a success for the soldiers, said Spec. Sean M. Seahausen, a 30-year-old native of Godfrey, Ill.

"As long as everybody gets back inside the wire safe (and) we put a few smiles on the faces around here... it's definitely a good day," said Seahausen.



Cpl. Daniel J. Redding

Local Iraqi children become excited as soldiers hand out candy, stuffed animals and other supplies in a village near Camp Taqaddum, Iraq, March 12th, 2006. The soldiers from 2nd Battalion, 130th Infantry Regiment, performed a multi-faceted mission during a day-long operation as they carried out weapons cache sweeps, investigated possible improvised explosive devices and conducted route clearance operations.

Cpl. Daniel Redding is a Combat Correspondent serving with the 1st Marine Logistics Group in the Al Anbar Province, Iraq. For more information email him at Daniel.Redding@cssemnf-wiraq.usmc.mil

Father, Son united at Taqaddum

LANCE CPL. STEPHEN J. HOLT

1st Marine Logistics Group (FWD)

CAMP TAQADDUM, Iraq - For men and women in the U.S. military, good-byes are one of the hardest parts of deploying to foreign lands, as service members must bid farewell to loved ones. However, for one father and his son, a deployment to Iraq didn't mean good-bye, but rather a fortunate crossing of their paths.

For nearly a month, Chief Petty Officer Nestor A. Lazaga, 53, and his 22 year-old son, Petty Officer 3rd Class Mark G. Lazaga, have had the unique experience of spending time together in a combat zone while stationed together here.

The younger Lazaga, a hospital corpsman assigned to Marine Aircraft Group 39, Marine Wing Support Squadron 372 at Camp Taqaddum, is preparing to return to Camp Pendleton, Calif., after a seven-month deployment as his father begins his own seven months in Iraq.

During Mark's deployment his job had him doing everything from the daily sick calls, to providing medical support on convoys and major construction projects in case any Marine was hurt while out on such missions.

Mark's motivation to join the Navy and medical field is due in large part to his father.

The senior Lazaga is the leading chief petty officer of the medical aid station for Brigade Service Support Group-1, the headquarters element of the 1st Marine Logistics Group here.

"My dad has been a huge inspiration to me. I saw what opportunities the Navy offered my father and I wanted to capitalize on them as well," said Mark.

Nestor's influence didn't stop there. He helped his son sort out how to best capitalize on the opportunities available in the Navy, and help figure out how Mark could best serve his nation.

"I've always been interested in the medical field. My father's career as a medical professional in the Navy showed me there were opportunities in this field. I didn't have any second thoughts," Mark said.

For Nestor and Mark, their journeys in Iraq could not have been possible without support by the rest of the family back in the United States, especially Jackie, the woman at the cen-



Lance Cpl. Stephen J. Holt

Chief Petty Officer Nestor Lazaga, 53, and his son, Petty Officer 3rd Class Mark Lazaga, 22, stand side by side at Camp Taqaddum, Iraq. Nestor will fill the role of leading chief petty officer of the medical aid station for Brigade Service Support Group 1, the headquarters element of the 1st Marine Logistics Group.

ter of their family.

"It's not easy having to take care of two kids and worry about two men in Iraq," said Mark. "We're in the middle of a war, and (my mother, Jackie) has to work at the same time. She's a great mother."

Nestor couldn't agree more with his son.

She is proud to support us, but it's also painful, he said. My family is very proud of

her because she has a strong heart and is so patient.

The deployment has not only given the family faith and strength, but has also been a bonding experience for the deployed members of the Lazaga family.

"Our relationship

will be stronger because we've experienced the same thing. I love my son and (we) can relate to one another better," said Nestor.

For Mark, the experience brought him closer to his father through a better understanding of his father's previous deployments.

"As a child I never quite understood deployments, but now that I've been through what he's (Nestor) been through I've been better able to relate to him and his past experiences,"

said Mark.

As Mark's deployment to Iraq nears an end, he plans on supporting his dad by taking on some of the responsibilities his father had shouldered back home.

"I'll maintain the house and help my mom by driving my brother and sisters places," Mark said. "I'll pretty much be the man of the house while my dad is away."

Although it will be hard for Nestor to remain in Iraq while his son goes home, one message remains clear.

"The mission is first, however I will miss my son," Nestor said. "Having two family members in a deployment is hard to do, but we must do our mission."

Although they will be separated by thousands of miles as one generation prepares to leave and another settles in, the Lazagas can take pride and solace in knowing their service has made their family stronger.

"Our relations will be stronger because we've experienced the same thing. I love my son and (we) can relate to one another."

Chief Petty Officer Nester A. Lazaga

Lance Cpl. Steven Holt is a Combat Correspondent serving with the 1st Marine Logistics Group in the Al Anbar Province. For more information email him at Stephen.Holt@cssemnf-wiraq.usmc.mil

Warriors' Words

CLB-5 was relieved by CLB-8 at a change of command ceremony at Camp Fallujah, Iraq March 12, 2006. Before the Marines return to Camp Lejeune, N.C., they offered some advice for those just arriving in support of Operation Iraqi Freedom. Here is what a few of the Marines had to say...

"Keep faith that one day you are going to go home and (you will) see your family."

Cpl. Scott P. Beaudry
CLB 8
2nd Marine Division



"Keep up with what is going on in the area. It is constantly changing"

Cpl. Joshua R. Clark
CLB 8
2nd Marine Division



"Stay focused on the job at hand."

Lance. Cpl. Robert W. Haws
CLB 8
2nd Marine Division



"(Junior Marines) Trust your leadership. We know what we are doing."

Cpl. Chris C. Conteras
CLB 8
2nd Marine Division



"Pay attention to detail. It's the little things that count, and know your jobs and don't be afraid to ask questions."

Sgt. Joseph S. Gray
CLB 8
2nd Marine Division



TOA, from Page 1

This is the third time I MEF has deployed in support of Operation Iraqi Freedom. Throughout the two previous deployments, I MEF was crucial in bringing stabilization to the western province of Al Anbar.

Zilmer emphasized the difference of this year's mission.

"Our mission here first and foremost is to develop the capabilities of the Iraqi security forces to allow them to win this counter-insurgency in Iraq," said the Operation Desert

Pendleton-based Marines Take over support role in Fallujah

CPL. LYNN MURILLO
I Marine Expeditionary Force

CAMP FALLUJAH, Iraq – Providing direct combat support to Marines in the Fallujah area is a mission Combat Logistics Battalion 5, 1st Marine Logistics Group (FWD) took responsibility of in a transfer of authority ceremony here, March 12, 2006.

The unit assumes this role as their Camp Lejeune, North Carolina-based counterparts from CLB 8 head home after a seven-month stint providing logistical support for Regimental Combat Team 8.

Delivering supplies such as food, water, and ammunition were daily missions for the unit.

During the elections here in December, CLB 8 was part of Operation Liberty Express, and delivered election supplies and provided security in some of the more dangerous parts of Fallujah.

Combat Logistics Battalion 5, made up primarily of Marines of the 1st Marine Logistic Group from Camp Pendleton, Calif., will serve in direct support of Regimental Combat Team 5 and perform missions like building and fortifying bases, repairing and clearing roads along

Storm veteran.

Zilmer also addressed Iraqi Security Force commanders in the audience.

"I look forward to the great association that we will develop over the next couple months as we collectively work to make our forces much stronger and win this important conflict."

Cpl. Jon Guibord is a Combat Correspondent serving with the I Marine Expeditionary Force in the Al Anbar Province. For more information email him at Jon.Guibord@gcemnf-wiraq.usmc.mil

transportation routes, and providing supplies to forward deployed combat units in their area of operations.

"We are here to help the RCT get the Iraqi Security Forces up to speed," said Lt. Col. Randy J. Lawson, commanding officer, CLB 5. "We would like to improve on the things that CLB 8 has done."

The Marines of CLB 5 will be deployed to the area for the next seven months, while Multi-National Forces-West continues to aid in the rebuilding of the Iraqi Security Forces.

Cpl. Lynn Murillo is a Combat Correspondent serving with the I Marine Expeditionary Force in the Al Anbar Province. For more information email her at Lynn.Murillo@gcemnf-wiraq.usmc.mil



Cpl. Lynn Murillo

The Marines of Combat Logistics Group gear up to provide logistical support to Regimental Combat Team 5 as they take the reigns from CLB 8 as they return home at a transfer of authority ceremony here March 12, 2006.

Snap Shots

FROM THE FRONT

CAMP MERCURY, Iraq - Lance Cpl. Joshua A. Oldman, a 20-year-old from Ethete, Wyo., tries his hand at handling the M-32 Multiple shot Grenade Launcher.



GySgt. Mark Oliva

AL ASAD, Iraq - Staff Sgt. Ronnie Torres, a 29-year-old platoon sergeant from Kilo Company, 3rd Battalion, 3rd Marine Regiment, based out of Kaneohe Bay, Hawaii, carries his sea bag to his tent after arriving to an airbase March 17.



GySgt. Mark Oliva

Sgt. Roe F. Siegle



CAMP HABBINYAH, Iraq - Iraqi soldiers drive on one of their new armored humvees. The Iraq's 2nd Brigade, 1st Iraqi Division took delivery of 10 armored humvees, purchased by Iraq's Ministry of Defense.



Cpl. Mark Sixbey

Camp Smitty, Iraq - An Iraqi girl admires her new wheelchair, which the Darkhorse Marines of Company I, 3rd Battalion, 5th Marine Regiment delivered to her home in a surprise visit in Al Hasa, Iraq, March 15.



Cpl. Mark Sixbey

CAMP SMITTY, Iraq - Marines from Weapons Platoon, Company I, 3rd Battalion, 5th Marine Regiment fire their M-16A4 service rifles at the indoor range at Camp Smitty, Iraq, March 14. The company set up the range in February to give their Marines a place to keep their sights zeroed and their skills sharp without the danger of indirect enemy fire.