

THE EAGLE & CRESCENT

WITH THE MARINES IN IRAQ

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Marine, Iraqi forces unite for Fallujah's security



Cpl. Mark Sixby

Corporal James Lund, a 21-year-old from St. Paul, Minn., assigned to Weapons Platoon, Company L, 3rd Battalion, 5th Marine Regiment, poses for a photo with an Iraqi soldier at Entry Control Point 5 in Fallujah, Iraq, March 29.

Cpl. Mark Sixbey

3rd Battalion, 5th Marine Regiment

FALLUJAH, Iraq - Marines alongside Iraqi police and soldiers is a sight few would have pictured two years ago.

At Entry Control Point 5, Marines from Weapons Platoon, L Company, 3rd Battalion, 5th Marine Regiment work daily with Iraqi soldiers and policemen to thwart terrorism in the city of Fallujah.

"The ECP is a deterrent," said 24-year-old Sgt. Jeremy Mueller, assigned to Weapons Platoon. "We get a lot of bad people that try to come through, and this is a good way to keep anticoalition forces out of the city."

The job at the ECP is to monitor who and what comes in and out of the city, checking cars and identification badges to make sure no munitions or terrorists are smuggled in or out. So far, their efforts have netted more than a dozen known insurgents.

"We've caught 15 really bad dudes," said Staff Sgt. Ronald Cullen, the platoon sergeant. He said every detainee is a criminal wanted for crimes against U.S. and Iraqi forces, many related to improvised explosive devices.

"One was a suspected insurgent cell leader, along with terrorist financiers, IED makers and IED emplacers," said the 30-year-old from Montrose, Mich.

Weapons Platoon brings experience to the job, having handled entry control point work

following Operation Al Fajr. They use their experience to train their Iraqi Police and Iraqi Army counterparts to eventually take over the responsibility.

In addition to getting to know the men who will replace them, Marines see the faces of the citizens they are working to protect.

"It's a good populous interaction," said 27-year-old infantryman Cpl. Joshua B. Herrera of San Jose, Calif. "It helps me understand how they react to certain situations, and to us."

Although many of the Marines greet the Iraqis passing through with smiles and hellos, they're all business when it comes to security procedures.

"We're very rigorous about making sure they have IDs and all the right paperwork," said Cpl. James Lund, assigned to Weapons Platoon. "It's so they understand we're here to help them, but if they're going to have a safe country, they're going to follow the rules."

Lund said he trusts the Iraqi soldiers he works with as though they were his own Marines.

"These guys are great," said the 21-year-old machine-gunner from St. Paul, Minn. "We're definitely building a relationship. They've got great work ethic, and I have confidence that they have our back. We've got theirs, as well."

"IPs are fun to work with," said Pfc. Zach Pederson, assigned to Weapons Platoon. "They work hard but like to goof off every now and then."

The 20-year-old from Sioux Falls, S.D., said the Marines and Iraqis entertain one another by learning one another's language and cultures. "They teach us most of our Arabic, and we teach them some English."

The job may not always be as exciting as taking the fight to the enemy, but the Marines understand the importance of keeping the

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Commander's Message to Families

Dear family and friends of MNF-W,

The warriors of I Marine Expeditionary Force Forward are showing their professionalism and skill as they take on new challenges and missions. The past two weeks included a number of events that should make you extremely proud of your Marine, Sailor, Soldier or Airman. As you may have seen on the news or read about in the paper, the 19th of March marked the three-year anniversary of Operation Iraqi Freedom. For so many service members, this deployment is their third or fourth in support of OIF. Their perseverance and continued sacrifice, and their families' as well, says a lot about the importance of the mission. Now that our focus has shifted to training our Iraqi Army counterparts, it is humbling to serve among young men and women who sacrifice their time away from loved ones to help put another nation on its own path to freedom.

This past week, I MEF (Fwd) helped the Iraqi government host recruiting days. Recruiting is a difficult task here in Al Anbar Province,



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

because there are many violent factions that threaten and kill those who willingly sign up to be a part of the Army or police force. Brave Iraqi men continue to stand in line for screening because they understand that they must fight against the insurgency themselves in order to achieve true freedom for their nation. The progress in recruiting in the I MEF Fwd part of Iraq is slow, but it is improving. Your Marines, Sailors, Soldiers, and Airmen can be proud of the role they play in making the recruiting days a success.

As I travel around the Al Anbar province visiting units, I find that the morale is high and everyone is focused on the task at hand. You can read about the great things we are doing on our new website www.IMEF-FWD.usmc.mil. Your support from the home front is so important to us and reassures us that you are behind us all the way. Every day I am amazed by the amount of packages and letters that pour into the mailrooms. Thank you!

Please keep us in your thoughts and prayers.



POOR SAFETY
IS
POOR PLANNING

PRACTICE ORM!

THINK SAFE



STAY SAFE

BRIEFS

I MEF (FWD) Web Site

The I MEF (Fwd) homepage is a great way for you and your family to know what is happening in Al Anbar. The site contains information on family readiness, Tricare, Motomail, Navy relief, Red Cross, the Injured Marine Fund and USO care packages. The site also has links to many units within I MEF (Fwd). Please visit the site at www.imef-fwd.usmc.mil for all this and the latest news from Iraq.

Operation Gratitude

Operation Gratitude is a nonprofit organization that sends care packages to deployed service members. The organization is planning a Patriotic Drive, which will run May-June 2006. They expect to send at least 40,000 packages during this drive, and will send a package to every service member whose name we receive. Visit www.operationgratitude.com to sign up yourself or a loved one.

Camp Fallujah MWR events

Open jam/ music practice	Mon. at 2000
Billiards	Tue. at 2000
Spades tournament	Wed. at 2000
Chess	Thur. at 2000
Jam night	Fri. at 2000
Easter egg run 15k	Sat. at 1500

*Movie Night: Daily at MWR facility at 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, MNF-W PAO

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CHAPEL OF HOPE SERVICE SCHEDULE

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

Chaplain's Corner

WALKING IN THE DARK



Chaplain (CMDR, USN) Mark Smith
Deputy MNF-W Chaplain

There is something Marine (read "macho") about not turning on your flashlight at night. When we walk back to our billeting at the end of a long day, it is often dark. When we use flashlights at night, they need to be filtered to a color that does not carry as far as white light so we don't make the enemies' attempts to target our camp any easier. But for a Marine, on time is late, and if filtered light is preferred, no light must be even better. So we walk back in the dark. Interesting things happen in the dark on a secured base. The shadows we walk by do not seem threatening – partially because we are familiar with most of the paths by now, but also because most things that would threaten us are prevented.

So in some ways we feel safer than in the United States, where there is no control over who we might run into while walking in the dark, and where we all get into vehicles several times a day and drive on freeways that have a higher death rate than does military service

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.

in Iraq. This safety many of us feel can be confusing, since many we share this base with do not stay within its walls. Some face danger every night. But they have superior fire power, superior armor. So even then, though far more at risk, their odds are better than our enemy's by a long shot.

But there is something else that happens when walking without light in the dark. It becomes second nature. We get used to it. We find ourselves looking around more. Not because of uncertainty, but because our darkness vision is better in the periphery than in the center of our vision, which is constantly bombarded with direct light all day. By scanning around we can catch the slightest shadow of movement – such as the other Marine walking silently down the street toward us. If we were not paying attention, we would collide. But looking for every clue, we see them and plan our path accordingly.

There is power in being able to travel in the dark. It feels like you can't be seen, but yet have the ability to maneuver and respond to your environment. There is a story Plato recalls about the shepherd Gyges, who finds a ring that makes him invisible. He then proceeds to commit unjust acts that he would not normally even consider. In the Christian Gospel of John, Jesus tells Nicodemus that many don't respond to God's light because they want to do evil, and that can only be done in the dark. Those who want to do good seek the light.

As we make our way down the paths of our own lives, it is good to be able to maneuver well, and to be on the watch for what can trip us up. But it is also good to be ready always to return to the light. To live always as if we can be seen, even when we might think we cannot be. Maybe two of Shakespeare's characters, in separate conversations, throw light on our path. "Men should be what they seem." "Reputation is what the world thinks a man is; character is what he really is." And H. Jackson Brown Jr. says it like it is: "Our character is what (is revealed) when we think no one is looking." For if we live as though all we do can be seen, we will get in the habit of being the kind of person we really want to be. Peace be with you all.

PRAYER FOR MARINES While prayer is offered for all who serve, remember especially those dear to us serving with the I Marine Expeditionary Force. Keep those 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. Amen.

Tank- infantry team denies insurgency around Fallujah

Gunnery Sgt. Mark Oliva
Regimental Combat Team 5

DRA DIGLA, Iraq - Insurgents no longer have free reign in the rural farmlands north of Fallujah.

A platoon of Marines from Company D, 2nd Tank Battalion, joined with a reinforced squad from Company E, 2nd Battalion, 6th Marine Regiment to scour the area north of Fallujah for insurgent activity in Operation Mesopotamia II.

The several-day operation took place in the Northern Regimental Security Area and disrupted insurgent activity, keeping terrorists from using the sparsely populated region as a staging area to launch attacks in Fallujah.

The combined tank-infantry team is serving in Iraq with Regimental Combat Team 5.

"We came out here to interdict anti-Iraqi forces and provide a secure environment for the Iraqi people," said 2nd Lt. Jim A. Neville, a 32-year-old tank platoon commander from West Newfield, Maine.

"It's not a permanently occupied area for us, so there's always something new for us."

Marines conducted a series of cache sweeps, cordon-and-knocks and snap vehicle check-

points, searching for hidden weapons and insurgents on wanted lists. Marines searched abandoned chemical factories, squatters' huts, farms, and roadside stores. At least two were detained for matching descriptions of wanted individuals and several weapons were confiscated.

The operation marked just one smaller operation in a string of efforts north of Fallujah. While most Marines work in the more densely populated areas of Fallujah, Saqlawiyah and Ameriyah, the task-organized infantry-armor teams made the most of their small-unit flexibility and the imposing force of the M-1A1 Main Battle Tank.

"The people up here sometimes feel neglected," Neville said. "They feel they don't get the security they need against anti-Iraqi forces who

intimidate and steal gas."

Tanks led the convoy of humvees and a seven-ton armored truck, loaded with Marines. They selected a site to search and tanks pushed out to cordon the area, main guns swinging back and forth as gunners searched for threats. Meanwhile, Marines dismounted and rushed to secure the buildings, moving all military-aged males out and checking rooms and cars for contraband items.

The operations lasted sometimes for hours, as Marines questioned the men for information that could lead them to insurgents frequenting



GySgt. Mark Oliva

A Marine walks alongside a rolling M-1A1 Main Battle Tank during a search of a farm north of Fallujah as part of Operation Mesopotamia II. A platoon of tanks and a reinforced infantry squad recently conducted a series of weapons searches and snap vehicle checkpoints near Dra Digla to disrupt insurgent activity in the Northern Regimental Security Area.

the area.

Other missions had engineers sweeping berms for weapons caches hidden in the dirt. And still others had Marines stopping cars that matched the description of cars suspected of being used by insurgents.

Neville estimated Marines questioned and searched more than 350 military-aged men in less than three days, creating a disruption of insurgent activity. Rolling the 70-ton tanks through the small towns sent the signal that Marines were here for business, denying insurgents free use of the area.

"The intimidation factor is there when you use tanks," added Staff Sgt. Zachary Dona, a 29-year-old platoon sergeant for the reinforced infantry squad. "Tanks integrated with infantry shows good presence and a lot of force."

The presence of repeated missions to the area by tanks, infantry and crews of amphibious assault vehicles has paid off, Neville explained. Engineers swept miles of berms, farmland and enormous gaping wells scraped from the desert floor, known areas for hidden weapons. They turned up little, a sign Neville took as encouraging.

"It shows the efforts of the tanks and AAVs is paying off," he said. "Six months ago, you could throw a stick and find a cache."

For the infantry, the chance to work alongside tanks was a boost in confidence. They

relied on tankers with their heavy armor and weapons to provide protection while they finished their searches and questioning.

"I was confident they knew their job," said Cpl. Joshua J. Frazier, a 22-year-old fire team leader from Destin, Fla. They intimidated anybody who wanted to mess with us."

Frazier worked with tanks in the past for training, but this was his first chance to operate alongside them in a combat operation. He was impressed by the effect they had on his Marines and the local population.

"They helped us to remain focused," he explained. "We

don't worry so much about outside security. The reaction of the people was more calm. They knew we were there for business."

Insurgents didn't have free movement through the villages, and the villagers themselves grew more trusting of the Marines' intent.

"We know they have to adjust to our efforts," he said. "We're creating a time for the people to get established, and the insurgents have to adjust around that because we have a good idea of what they're doing."

Gunnery Sgt. Mark Oliva is the Regimental Combat Team 5 public affairs chief. For information, e-mail him at OlivaMD@gcemnf-wiraq.usmc.mil.

Marine Air Wing proves its versatility



Lance Cpl. Brandon L. Roach

Marines with the Incident Response Platoon keep close perimeter security while a convoy prepares for departure to Al Asad, Iraq, after repairing a bridge in Al Anbar Province March 17. The mission was a high priority because the bridge was not trafficable due to damage from rains in February, which caused problems for convoys using that route. The IRP is part of Marine Wing Support Squadron 274, Marine Wing Support Group 37 (Reinforced), 3rd Marine Aircraft Wing.

Lance Cpl. Brandon J. Roach

3rd Marine Air Wing

AL ANBAR PROVINCE, Iraq - Burned and blistered by the hot desert sun, Marines worked tirelessly to repair a damaged bridge north of Al Asad March 15-17.

Bridging a dried-up riverbed, the destroyed concrete slab needed help from the Marines of Marine Wing Support Squadron 274, Marine Wing Support Group 37 (Reinforced), 3rd Marine Aircraft Wing.

The bridge, which had been the site of numerous improvised explosive devices and was washed out by rains in early February, was an accident waiting to happen.

"This bridge was nontrafficable and very dangerous," said 1st Lt. Jeremy L. Henderson, engineer operations officer-in-charge, MWSS-274. "It was a very questionable area because IEDs could be placed in the holes."

There were also several locations nearby where IEDs could be triggered from around the bridge site, according to Henderson.

After weeks of planning, the motivated Marines of MWSS-274's Incident Response Platoon went into action. Marines mounted MK-19 40 mm and M2 .50-caliber machine guns onto High Mobility Multi-Wheeled

Vehicles in preparation to set up a security perimeter at the site.

Upon reaching the site, a hasty sweep was executed, ensuring the area was clear of any threats. The engineers then attacked the project head-on.

Combat engineers cleared the bridge of the old concrete chunks and prepared it to be filled with reinforcing bars and concrete, while heavy equipment operators excavated the area, moving gravel and sand near the bridge to support it.

"The security element was great," said Lance Cpl. Anthony Butler, engineer equipment operator, MWSS-274. "Having the IRP out there, I could actually relax and focus while operating my machine."

According to Gunnery Sgt. Ryan S. Hermance, company first sergeant, Engineering Company, MWSS-274, the operations tempo was high from the day they arrived at the bridge site. The Marines worked nonstop with very little break time.

After two days the bridge was ready for concrete. The engineers

brought in three concrete trucks carrying roughly 22 cubic yards of concrete combined. Then the engineers began filling the holes in the bridge.

Once the concrete was poured and the mess cleaned up, all that could be done was wait for the concrete to dry.

"At this point, our biggest threat was receiving indirect fire," said Henderson, a native of Kenneyville, Ill.

Seven hours of waiting paid off. The concrete dried enough to make pressure-release cuts in it. Shortly after, a decision to pack up and return to base was made.

Within one hour of the decision, the equipment was loaded up and the perimeter security was brought in around the convoy. Meanwhile, the Marines, eager to get hot food and a shower, finalized prepping their equipment for the trip back to safety.



Lance Cpl. Brandon L. Roach

Cpl. Michael Nunning levels concrete during a bridge reconstruction project in Al Anbar Province, Iraq, March 17.

Lance Cpl. Brandon L. Roach is a combat correspondent serving with the 3rd Marine Air Wing in Al Anbar Province. For information, e-mail him at Brandon.Roach@acemnf-wiraq.usmc.mil.

Cpl. Daniela L Herman
LEADING
from the
Leash



Photo by Cpl. Jon C. Guibord

AGE: 22
HOMETOWN: Douglasville, GA
MARITAL STATUS: Married
KIDS: My puppy, Remy, at home.
COLLEGE STUDIES: None yet
UNIT/DUTY STATION: MP CO K-9/ Camp Lejeune, N.C.
MOS/JOB: 5811/5812 MP/K-9
FIRST STEPPED ON YELLOW FOOTPRINTS: 22 February 2003
HOW MANY DEPLOYMENTS: 1st deployment
FAVORITE HANGOUT: My house
HOBBIES: Shopping, going to the beach
LAST SONG OR MOVIE DOWNLOADED: "Closer to You" by the Wallflowers
LAST BOOK YOU READ: The Dogs of Babel
FAVORITE MRE: I hate them all equally
FAVORITE PIECE OF GEAR WITH YOU: My dog, Cindy
WHAT YOU HAVE LEARNED DURING DEPLOYMENT: You don't know what you've got until it's gone.
WHAT YOU WILL REMEMBER MOST: The people

you meet and the friendships you make.
WHERE YOU ARE GOING ON VACATION WHEN YOU REDEPLOY: Somewhere tropical.
WORST PART ABOUT DEPLOYMENT: Being away from family and everyone back home.
WHAT DOES YOUR FAMILY THINK ABOUT YOUR DEPLOYMENT: Mixed emotions of pride and worry.
BEST/WORST MEMORY OF MARINE CORPS: Best memory of the Marine Corps would be the three months spent in San Antonio, Texas, for K-9 school; the worst would be the whole tour at Camp Lejeune.
FAVORITE COMEDIAN: Dave Chapelle
FAVORITE QUOTE: "And ever has it been that love knows not its own depth until the hour of separation."
WHAT YOU WILL BE DOING IN 5 YEARS: I hope to be out of the Marine Corps and training dogs for a government or civilian agency.
ADVICE FOR OTHERS HERE: Keep yourself busy - it makes the time go faster.

Teamwork, from Page 1

enemy out of the city. Pfc. Ko Vang said he was trained for a more traditional infantry role, but he said he enjoys ensuring the city has strong ECPs.

"I don't mind this," said Vang, a 20-year-old infantryman from White Bear Lake, Minn. "We're still helping out by searching every vehicle that comes through the city."

They work so closely together that in an emergency a wounded Iraqi is equally important as a wounded Marine. The platoon's line corpsman, Petty Officer 3rd Class Jason Bennett, demonstrated that when an Iraqi soldier was shot in a drive-by shooting incident.

"We had a firefight a few days ago," said the 21-year-old from Carrollton, Texas. "A car drove up and fired a burst on one of the IAs. There were rounds flying over our heads as we ran up there to treat him."

"The Marines ran up there to help, but it was too late," Lund said. That sort of dedication and camaraderie is shared among U.S. and Iraqi forces alike.

"We were ready to fight alongside them," he added.

The soldier was evacuated to Camp Fallujah's surgical hospital. The Marines say the future of Iraq's security is in good hands, based on what they've seen at the ECP.

"I could patrol by myself with the Iraqi soldiers knowing I'll be safe," said Sgt. Milton Donatus, the sergeant of the guard for ECP

5 We've already got that trust between us, and we'll do just about anything to make sure they're safe."

He also had high praises for their discipline, saying they respect the rank structure and always arrive to work on time.

"If you tell them to do something differently, they'll be on top of it," said the 28-year-old from the Island Republic of Palau. "I've never heard them complain."

Cpl. Mark Sixbey is a combat correspondent with the 3rd Battalion, 5th Marine Regiment in Al Anbar Province. For information, e-mail him at SixbeyMA@gcemnf-wiraq.usmc.mil.

Deployment makes for family reunion at Camp Baharia

Cpl. Brian Reimers

1st Battalion, 25th Marine Regiment

CAMP BAHARIA, Iraq - The Torrey brothers didn't exactly choose the same exotic, foreign location to catch up on old times. The Marine Corps took care of all that when the two Springfield, Mass., brothers met up here.

The two Marines met up when Lance Cpl. Justin D. Torrey, 23, assigned to 1st Battalion, 25th Marine Regiment, arrived to take over for his younger brother, Lance Cpl. James M. Torrey, 19, assigned to 2nd Battalion, 6th Marine Regiment. The two battalions are swapping out duties in Fallujah with Regimental Combat Team 5.

It was the first time the two have seen each other in more than seven months.

"I heard a while ago that his battalion might be coming out here to replace us," said James. I didn't believe it until I saw a few friends of his who confirmed it."

The two found each other in the middle of the night and greeted each other with a hug and smiles. Past stories were immediately recalled by one as the other added details. It was as if the two young men never missed a moment apart.

"It seemed like they were right back together in the states," said Lance Cpl. Carl L. Alves, a good friend of Justin's. "It was great to seem them finally together. Justin has been talking about hoping to see his brother for a long time now."

Justin has seemed to keep

himself right behind his brother's schedule throughout their Marine Corps careers. The younger James enlisted first, paving the way for his older brother to follow.

"It's funny how ironic it is that my brother is falling into my footsteps again, because this isn't the first time," James said. "He has been right behind me since I got out of boot camp."

With a little help from his younger brother, Justin decided to become a Marine.

"I had always wanted to be in the military, but I did not want to stop doing my job at home right away," Justin explained. "I joined the Marine Corps Reserves after my brother came home from boot camp and helped convinced me to do it."

The two share a lot of common history, albeit separated by a few months. They shared the same recruit training company and attended

the School of Infantry at the same time.

Both brothers agreed there was a bit of luck involved with still getting to see each other, even while they are both deployed.

"The Marine Corps has actually allowed us to see each other more often than we would usually," James said. "Seeing each other has worked out pretty well."

Marines who serve with Justin are enjoying his brother's company as they prepare to swap places.

"It has helped out the Marines here being able to talk to James about what has happened during his time here," Alves said. "It has been a reality check for us to listen to his brother tell us how things are going out here."

The connection is more than just Marines swapping sea stories, though. The time together here, although short, gave James a perspective on the times and hardships his brother endured while deployed.

"It's been kind of nice to hear all the stories and see pictures of my brother with all his friends here," James added. "It keeps me posted on what he has been up to since the last time we saw each other."

Still, the time is short. At one end of the camp, James packed to redeploy to Camp Lejeune, N.C. At the other, Justin prepared for his first missions outside the safety



Cpl. Brian Reimers

Lance Cpls Justin D. Torrey and James M. Torrey spent some time together before Justin (left) replaces his younger brother James for duty with Regimental Combat Team 5 in Fallujah, Iraq.

Cpl. Brian Reimers is a combat correspondent serving with the 1st Battalion, 25th Marine Regiment in Al Anbar Province. For information, e-mail him at ReimersBJ@gcemnf-wiraq.usmc.mil.

Hundreds turn out for Iraqi Army recruiting drive

New recruits are good indicator that Iraqis are determined for self-sustainment

1st. Lt. Nathan Braden
Regimental Combat Team 5

FALLUJAH, Iraq - More than 800 Iraqi men enlisted in the Iraqi Army during a three-day recruiting drive here by a mobile recruiting team from the Ministry of Defense.

The 813 recruits were part of a larger recruiting effort to enlist 1,000 Iraqi men from Al Anbar Province into the Iraqi Army.

"The overall goal is to enlist 5,000 recruits from Al Anbar Province by the end of October, but they are getting recruited in groups of 1,000," said Capt. Selden B. Hale, a recruiting advisor traveling with the MRT and assigned to the Headquarters Transition Team under Multi-National Security Transition Command-Iraq.

One thousand recruits is the maximum capacity of the Basic Combat Training course, the first stop for the new recruits. The recruits will learn basic infantry skills during the five-week training package before being assigned to an army unit.

Soldiers from the 2nd Brigade, 1st Iraqi Army Division facilitated the recruiting effort by providing personnel to work at the recruiting site. Soldiers provided food and water to the recruits as they moved them through the recruiting process.

Fallujah police officers assisted in the recruiting effort by providing a security escort for recruits from downtown Fallujah to the recruiting station near the city's edge.

"The IAs and IPs did a phenomenal job," said Maj. Brian D. Wirtz, an operations advisor with the Military Transition Team assigned to 2nd Brigade, 1st Iraqi Army Division.

"Their success demonstrates the great cooperation between the city government officials and the Iraqi security forces," added Wirtz, a 32-year-old from Carlsbad, Calif.

The recruiting effort here took place without incident, despite a national trend of insurgent attacks on security force recruiting sites.

"In the past, recruiting sites have been lucrative targets for insurgents," Hale said. "The Iraqis have made tremendous efforts in force protection. They did all the things they needed to make the recruiting centers safe and secure."



Cpl. Spencer M. Murphy

An Iraqi Army recruit undergoes a Biometric Automated Tool Set screening while processing into the Iraqi Army March 28 during the first day of a three-day recruiting drive in Fallujah. The BATS system uses a database to screen recruits for possible past insurgent involvement.

The recruits will most likely be assigned to either the 1st or 7th Iraqi Army Division, both of which are stationed in Al Anbar Province. Most of the soldiers will remain in the infantry ranks. Others will be sent to follow-on schools to learn an applicable trade, such as humvee mechanics or cooking.

"We're looking forward to them coming," said Army Capt. John W. Lee, 32, from Falls Church, Va., serving as an advisor with the Military Transition Team assigned to 4th Brigade, 1st Iraqi Army Division.

The 4th Brigade currently has one battalion operating in the city of Fallujah and two battalions operating in nearby cities.

"They will be great at intelligence gathering because it will be easier for them to blend in with the local populace," Lee said.

The majority of soldiers currently assigned to the 4th Brigade come from areas outside Al Anbar Province.

"Also, the Fallujah people will feel more confident and see them as defenders of the people, not occupiers," he added. "Iraq is a very 'clannish' society. They view anyone from outside their region as outsiders."

The MRT made recruiting visits to Al Qaim, Ar Ramadi and Haditha before stopping in Fallujah.

"We tried to visit most major cities within Al Anbar," said Hale, a 31-year-old artillery officer from Amarillo, Texas.

The use of mobile recruiting teams allowed

Iraqis who don't live close to a permanent recruiting station an opportunity to enlist in the army.

The MRT is composed of five members, who screen and process potential future soldiers before accepting them as recruits. One of the members, a medical doctor, screens recruits to ensure they are fit for military duty.

"I screen for mental, physical and psychological fitness," said the Iraqi doctor assigned to the MRT working in Fallujah.

"We need fresh blood in this army," added the doctor. "To have a strong army, we need strong soldiers."

Another benefit of the mobile recruiting teams is they provide the Iraqi Army a pool of enlisted men from across the country. Soldiers recruited into the ranks provide the army units with a variety of backgrounds and previous experiences.

"Of all the functions of the MOD, recruiting is probably one of the most heavily sustained by the Iraqis," Hale added. "They operate their own recruiting stations and send out MRT's on their own. The Coalition has very minimal involvement."

First Lt. Nathan Braden is the Regimental Combat Team 5 public affairs officer. For information, e-mail him at Nathan.Braden@gcemnf-wiraq.usmc.mil.



Cpl. Antonio Rosas

An Iraqi Army soldier keeps a keen eye on his surroundings during an Iraqi-led patrol through Ubaydi, Iraq, in western Al Anbar Province March 23. More than 100 soldiers from the 2nd Battalion, 3rd Brigade, 7th Iraqi Army Division conducted their first self-sustained operation to quell insurgents in Iraq's Al Anbar Province.

Iraqi soldiers conduct solo patrols in western Iraq

Cpl. Antonio Rosas

1st Battalion, 7th Marine Regiment

UBAYDI, Iraq - Iraqi soldiers have taken their first steps toward functioning entirely on their own in this remote region of northwestern Iraq.

More than 100 soldiers from the 2nd Battalion, 3rd Brigade, 7th Iraqi Army Division conducted their first self-sustained operation to quell insurgents in Iraq's Al Anbar Province March 23.

The uniformed Iraqi men conducted a "cordon and knock" in this town of 5,000, providing perimeter security and searching house to house for signs of insurgent activity. They also interacted with the local populace, with minimal supervision from the unit's Military Transition Team - Coalition service members assigned to track and guide each Iraqi military unit's transition to independent operations.

"They [Iraqi soldiers] were the ones knocking on doors, meeting with the people and shaking hands," said 1st Lt. Dean A. White, MiTT team chief. "They looked strong out there."

The operation resulted in no tangible results, such as hidden weapons caches or captured insurgents.

Still, Coalition and Iraqi military leadership here say the operation was a success, as it put Iraqi forces in the driver's seat and allowed locals to see their nation's army providing security.

"They planned and executed the operation by themselves, instead of us guiding them," said Army Staff Sgt. Ken E. Miller, MiTT training officer. "They [Iraqi Army] are ready to show people that they can do this on their own."

The 48-year-old from Hershey, Pa., credited the success of the 2nd Battalion's recent operation to strong noncommissioned officer leadership within the ranks - corporals and sergeants leading squads and platoons. The Iraqis' performance - especially that of the unit's "Jundis," or junior enlisted soldiers - was enough to impress Miller.

In the past, Iraqi soldiers conducted combined operations with Coalition forces. They've had to heavily rely on Coalition forces for everything from convoy security and logistics to operational planning and tactical decision-making.

Now, Iraqis are beginning to take over these types of operations while the Coalition units they're partnered with take a backseat role.

"I am very happy with the Jundi. They did a good job, and we were able to talk with the people and show them the Iraqi Army," said one Iraqi Army captain, the unit's operations chief. "The Americans were just here to help us."

The 35-year-old from Basrah said the Iraqi soldiers want to establish a working relationship with the people to help stop insurgents' intimidation of the residents along the town, which borders the Euphrates River in northwestern Al Anbar Province.

"The people here are afraid of those people that come over from the other side of the river with guns and tell them not to help the Army," said the captain. "That is why I want to have good relations with these people."

Meanwhile, the 1st Bn., 7th Marines - the Marine unit partnered with Iraqi soldiers from 2nd Bn. - will continue to provide security in this region near the Syrian border. Coalition leadership say the Iraqis will spearhead this mission by year's end.

See IA goes solo **Page 10**

IA goes solo, from page 9

The operation allowed Miller and other MiTT staff members to identify any deficiencies within the unit before they conduct their next operation.

Currently, Marines from A Company, 1st Battalion, 7th Marine Regiment are partnered with the Iraqi unit. The two forces share the "battle space," or area of operations, which encompasses the town.

"The goal is for the Iraqi unit to become an independent force, where the Marines will provide only a mentoring role," said Miller. "This will be the most effective way of turning

over the battle positions to the Iraqis."

Last week's operation spawned another Iraqi Army achievement, when soldiers executed their first logistics re-supply..

"They [Iraq Army] will be able to run their own logistics convoys from now on," White assured.

The success here comes on the heels of other recent achievements of Iraqi military units in western Al Anbar. Two weeks ago, an Iraqi Army company from 2nd Battalion, 2nd Brigade conducted a similar independent operation in Khaffajiyah – a village along the Euphrates River 90 miles east of the Syrian border.

Iraqi soldiers here seem to be on the path to success in this remote region of western Al Anbar Province.

"If the (Iraqi) battalion continues to do this well, there is no reason why they should not own this battle space by the end of the year," said White, a 38-year-old from Seymour, Conn.

Cpl. Anthony Rosas is a combat correspondent serving with the 1st Battalion, 7th Marine Regiment in Al Anbar Province. For information, e-mail him at RosasA@gcemnf-wiraq.usmc.mil.

Marines trade everyday jobs for guard force



Cpl. Joseph DiGirolamo

Private first class Bryan J. Wilson, a data network technician from Naples, Fla., and Lance Cpl. Randy E. Howard, a mortarman from Detroit, both stand post and look for any suspicious activities. The Marines come from a mixture of different military occupational specialties but are united together to form the interior guard force.

Cpl. Joseph DiGirolamo

3rd Battalion, 8th Marine Regiment

AR RAMADI, Iraq - At Hurricane Point, the Marines of 3rd Battalion, 8th Marine Regiment work around the clock planning, executing and refining operations in western Ramadi.

Day and night, a select group of Marines fortifies positions surrounding the camp, allowing fellow warriors to work, live and rest in relative security as they accomplish their missions.

These Marines have a mixture of different military occupational specialties. However, today they are united together to carry out one job in particular: the interior guard force.

"We are called the guardian angles of the camp," said Lance Cpl. Dux A. Lopez, an

administrative clerk for Headquarters and Service Company, 3rd Bn., 8th Marines.

The battalion deployed last year to Fallujah from January 2005 to August 2005. Now, the Marines and sailors have returned to Iraq to participate to conduct operations in western Ramadi.

The Marines of the guard force keep a watchful eye on everything that goes on in the city around them, constantly on the lookout for suspicious activity.

Before they could stand post, the new sentries went through a rigorous five-day training evolution.

Their training covered areas such as escalation of force procedures, weapons conditions, the purpose of each post, and how to use the new Multi-Functional Agile Remote Control Robot.

"The main challenge is making sure the

Marines learn and understand the knowledge taught to them," said Sgt. Antoine M. Beasley, the sergeant of the guard responsible for the Marines on post. "The other challenge is getting the guys familiar with their post and surrounding area."

Unit cohesion is also important. Since the Marines come from all different sections of the battalion, they must quickly learn how to operate as a team, said the 27-year-old from Augusta, Ga.

"The purpose of guard is to provide a constant overwatch of Hurricane Point to ensure the safety of the Marines and sailors inside," said Cpl. Joshua C. Myers, a 23-year-old motor transport operator with the guard force. "We are the main line of defense between the insurgents and the Marines."

Standing post for hours at a time can be challenging; however, the Marines know with certainty that staying sharp could be a matter of life or death.

"They have to be observant and pay attention to every detail," said Lance Cpl. Richard R. Ricketts, a mortarman for the company. "They can't get complacent."

The Marines observe everyone and keep an eye out for anything suspicious, such as people planting potential IED's or other kinds of explosives, said Lance Cpl. Joel J. Fuller, a Nuclear Biological and Chemical Defense specialist with the guard.

The sentries keep a continuous watch for their fellow Marines, and hopefully everyone inside camp can conduct their missions with a little peace of mind. The battalion lives by the motto "everyday is day one." This is especially true for the guard.

"Without the guard force, Marines simply couldn't sleep at night," said Beasley.

Cpl. Joseph DiGirolamo is a combat correspondent serving with the 3rd Battalion, 8th Marine Regiment in Al Anbar Province. For information, e-mail him at DiGirolamoJL@gcemnf-wiraq.usmc.mil.

Warriors' Words

What do you do to keep yourself safe?

"Keep my head on a swivel. Outside the wire I keep my eyes and ears open."

HM2 Rudy J. Lopez
1st Reconnaissance Bn.
1st Marine Division



"Travel with a buddy. I make sure I am accounted for at all times."

Lance Cpl. Ryan K. McDonald
Military Police Co.
1st Bn., 14th Marine Reg.



"I wash my hands a lot and drink a lot of water."

Lance Cpl. Abagale H. Radle
1st Intelligence Bn.
1 MEF



"The biggest push is electrical safety, vehicle safety, accountability, and PT to prepare for the heat."

Senior Chief Paul M. Celli
Safety Officer
9th Naval Construction Bn.



"As a combat cameraman, I always stick to the unit I am attached to."

Sgt. Izzel Sanchez
Combat Camera
1 MEF



Heat injury a factor as mercury rises

Cpl. Jon Guibord
1st Marine Expeditionary Force

CAMP FALLUJAH, Iraq – Outdoor temperatures sore above 130 degrees Fahrenheit during the summer months here, so personnel will need to take proper precautions in order to keep themselves from falling victim to the dangerous side effects of heat injury.

Everyone is susceptible to a heat injury. Luckily, there are multiple ways prevent this potentially lethal threat from striking.

"A lot of people have the misconception that all you have to do is drink a lot of water or Gatorade," said the leading petty officer of the 1st Marine Expeditionary Force Headquarters Group Aid Station, Petty Officer 1st class Virginia M. Mayo.

According to Mayo, your body uses a mixture of water, electrolytes and sodium, and without a good mixture of all of them you can still become a victim of heat casualty.

There are several different types of heat injury. The most common heat injury is heat cramps, which occur when your body has an insufficient amount of salt.

"You probably have enough water, but not enough salt intake," said Mayo, of New Port Richey, Fla.

Heat cramps usually go away with time. Drinking water or Gatorade can assist in the healing process.

The second type of heat injury is heat exhaustion. Heat exhaustion is the body's inability to supply the increased blood volume needed by the brain, skin and the muscles in extreme heat. This results in dizziness, weakness and fainting.

The third and most dangerous heat injury is heat stroke.

"Heat stroke is when your body's core

temperature reaches above a certain limit, roughly 106 degrees," said Mayo. "Your brain begins to fry, causing possible brain damage or death."

It doesn't take a corpsman to treat heat injuries. If someone shows symptoms of heat injury, the first step is to move him to a cool area. Remove clothing to allow the body to release some of the heat. Pour a small amount of water on his head to reduce the core temperature. The person should then be seen by a medical professional so they may get a core temperature taken to ensure heat stroke is not occurring. The process of checking the core temperature rectally is referred to as receiving a "silver bullet" among Marines and sailors.

There are several telltale signs if someone is suffering from a heat injury.

"Marines usually complain that they feel hungover, but they didn't have the fun the night before to cause it," said Mayo, who has been a corpsman for more than seven years.

Other indicators of heat injury include generalized weakness, headache, dizziness, low blood pressure, elevated pulse, and temperature elevation.

There are several preventive measures to reduce the risk of heat injury. There are numerous water bottles located around the camp, three square meals a day are available, and enough opportunity in order to get the proper amount of sleep, but it is up to the

individual to ensure his body is prepared for strenuous activity in the heat.



Cpl. Jon Guibord
Cpl. Stephen J. Wilbanks, 35, a team leader with Mortuary Affairs, Combat Logistics Battalion 5, 1st Marine Logistics Group, rehydrates himself after running a physical fitness test here March 30.

Cpl. Jon Guibord is a combat correspondent serving with the 1st Marine Expeditionary Force in Al Anbar Province. For information, e-mail him at Jon.Guibord@gcemnf-wiraq.usmc.mil.

Snap Shots

FROM THE FRONT

Photo by Lance Cpl. Brian J. Holloran



CAMP KOREAN VILLAGE, Iraq - Sgt. Jason G. Forgyson with Marine Air Control Squadron 2, MACS-1, Marine Air Control Group 38, 3rd Marine Aircraft Wing stands atop the air traffic control tower, guiding incoming aircraft safely to the ground at Iraq March 29.

Photo by Cpl. Mark Sixbey

Photo by Cpl. William Skelton



Abu Ghraib, Iraq - Three young boys living on the outskirts of Abu Ghraib prison take time to pose for a picture while Marines from Company C, 1st Battalion, 1st Marine Regiment conduct a survey in the area. The Iraqi children were excited to see the Marines arrive.

Photo by Gunnery Sgt. Mark Oliva



Fallujah, Iraq - Field shaves will soon be a thing of the past for Lance Cpl. John S. Hayes. The Marine, from 2nd Battalion, 6th Marine Regiment, Regimental Combat Team 5, finished his last planned operation recently and is wrapping up his seven-month tour here.

Photo by Cpl. Graham A. Paulsgrove



RABALLAH, Iraq - Marine patrols must be on the alert at all times for insurgent activities, even in areas deemed friendly, such as Raballah, Iraq. Here, with weapons at the ready, Lance Cpl. Jared Eversoll and Lance Cpl. Michael S. Rodriguez carefully search room-March 29 during a cordon and knock operation in the small town.