

# THE EAGLE & CRESCENT

WITH THE MARINES IN IRAQ

Vol. 1 - Edition 6 - June 5, 2006

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## Country music outlaw Toby Keith visits Camp Fallujah

**Cpl. Lynn Murillo**  
I Marine Expeditionary Force

**CAMP FALLUJAH, Iraq**  
- Country music superstar Toby Keith performed a Memorial Day concert here for nearly 4,000 service members both live from the Fallujah Chapel and via the internal computer-based broadcasting system here May 29.

The fans cheers erupted into a roar as the patriotic songwriter and performer stepped onto the small stage. Keith opened the hour-long acoustic show with his crowd pleasing hit "I Love This Bar," bringing the Marines, sailors, soldiers and airmen a little piece of America. He played new songs, as well as a few classics like "Should've Been A Cowboy" and "Beer For My Horses."

This is Keith's second visit here. The first was in 2004 just after Marines took over the camp. He played two other venues on Memorial Day as part of the USO's Toby Keith Tour.

"You can't appreciate what (service members) do until you see it," said Keith. "Everybody is so good at what they do and when you come here, you can really understand why America is the number one fighting force in the world."

The country singer expressed a special satisfaction in lifting troop morale and honoring his father, a Vietnam veteran.

The commandant of the Marine Corps, Gen. Michael W. Hagee, was in the front row for the concert and sang along as Keith sang "Courtesy of the Red, White and Blue" from his 2003



JO1 Benjamin Franklin

Country music sensation Toby Keith performed for service members here May 29. The show was a part of the USO's five-day "Toby Keith Tour of Iraq."

album, "Unleashed."

Hagee said he enjoyed the concert and was happy to welcome the superstar known as the bad boy of country music to the headquarters for Marines operating in Al Anbar Province.

Longtime fans might have considered the performance a way to take their minds off the serious business of war fighting.

"It was an honor to meet him," said Sgt. Cassie L. Lucero, 28, from Phoenix, an

administrative clerk with I Marine Expeditionary Force's command element.

"I am a huge fan of anyone that supports us," Lucero said. "The morale boost he just gave everyone here makes me proud to be out here serving my country."

Lance Cpl. Joseph W. Hanson of Greybull, Wyo., also a self-proclaimed "big fan," was elated with Keith's performance.

"I think it is awesome that he would come out to the middle of Iraq to give us a concert," said Hanson, a weather observer with I MEF. "If he is spending his Memorial Day out here with us, it means a lot,"

Maj. Gen. Richard C. Zilmer, commanding general of Multi-National Forces-West, presented Keith with a Ka-bar fighting knife and a personalized guitar strap made from a desert-digital camouflage pattern as a token of gratitude for his time and effort. Zilmer jokingly told Keith that he hopes to see the guitar strap in one of Keith's upcoming music videos. The crowd laughed as Keith smiled, shaking Zilmer's hand and agreeing to his request.

Keith and his crew are on a five-day tour of Iraq, entertaining troops at several forward operating bases in the next few days, demonstrating their continuing pride and support for service members here.

*Cpl. Lynn Murillo is a combat correspondent with I Marine Expeditionary Force serving in Al Anbar Province. For information, e-mail her at [Lynn.Murillo@cemnf-wiraq.usmc.mil](mailto:Lynn.Murillo@cemnf-wiraq.usmc.mil).*

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### 5-DAY FORECAST



# Commanding General's Message to Families

Dear family and friends,  
Hello from Al Anbar Province, Iraq. This is Major General Rick Zilmer, the Commanding General of I Marine Expeditionary Force Forward.

The past two weeks have been busy for the I Marine Expeditionary Force (Fwd). In the sweltering heat of 109 degree days the Marines, sailors, soldiers and airmen continue their mission. They are relentless and motivated, making the difficult tasks seem effortless. They are a group of strong men and women to be proud of.

Memorial Day was a very special day for the service members of I MEF (Fwd). The Commandant was our guest at a Memorial Service in honor of those who have died in all of America's wars, and more specifically, those who have given their lives since the beginning of our deployment in February. The service was a special tribute with performances from the Fallujah Choir, the Gospel Choir and the Brass Band; all essembles were made up of I MEF (Fwd) service members. During the Commandant's



**Maj. Gen. Richard C. Zilmer**  
Commanding General  
Multi-National Forces West

visit, he spoke to the Marines and answered their questions in a series of Town Hall meetings. Many of the Marines had their photos taken with the Commandant and a few of them received a coin from him.

Memorial Day on Camp Fallujah drew to a close with a concert by Toby Keith. More than a thousand Marines kicked back and listened to his patriotic tunes.

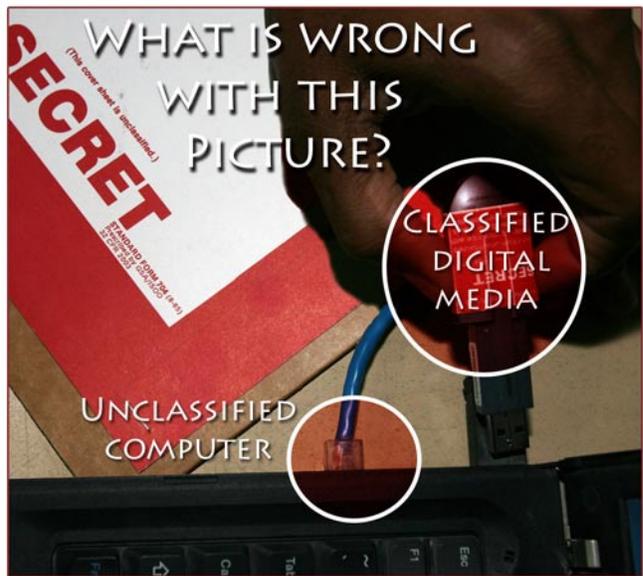
Memorial Day in Iraq was an occasion to remember the proud traditions and honor what makes America a great nation; also to remember those men and women who have made the ultimate sacrifice to keep our nation safe. As we move into June, we will redouble our efforts and resolve in accomplishing our mission of bringing security to the western province of Iraq.

Please keep us in your thoughts and prayers. Please check back after June 15th to hear more news about your Marines, sailors, soldiers, and airmen doing a fine job out here in Al Anbar Province. Until then, take care on the home front and Semper per Fidelis.

# MNF-W

OPERATION IRAQI FREEDOM

OPERATIONAL  
SECURITY IS  
EVERYONE'S  
RESPONSIBILITY



**CAMP FALLUJAH, Iraq** - The Camp Fallujah library reopened June 3 in a ribbon cutting ceremony attended by the Multi-National Force West commanding general, Maj. Gen. Richard C. Zilmer. For the past three weeks, several Kellogg, Brown and Root employees along with I Marine Expeditionary Force Headquarters Group Marines worked hard to upgrade the facility.

Formerly a chow hall, the facility does not look like much from the outside. Today, however, it serves as a newly renovated internet café. The

older café, which had 21 internet stations, now has 52; it has also doubled its phones from 12 to 24. It is still possible for people to have to wait their turn to use the internet or phones, but instead of waiting on a wooden bench, service members and civilian employees here can now watch television on a big-screen TV from the comfort of large leather couches.

Any service member, DOD employee, and contractor with PX privileges can use the facility. The renovated facility is closed two hours a day, from 4-6 a.m.



Cpl. Jon Guibord

## Camp Fallujah

### MWR events

Open jam/ music night	Mon.	at 2000
Risk night	Tue.	at 2000
Ping Pong tournament	Wed.	at 2030
Spades Tournament	Thurs.	at 2030
Karaoke night	Fri.	at 2030
Perimeter run	Sat.	at 0800

\*Movie Night: MWR facility daily at 2000.  
For more information, contact  
crystal.nadeau@halliburton.com.

### A Message to our readers

The Eagle & Crescent is a publication produced for Multi National Forces - West service members and their families and friends. We appreciate your interest, prayers and patriotic support.

Semper Fidelis, MNF-W PAO

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## CHAPEL OF HOPE SERVICE SCHEDULE

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

## THE CHAPLAIN'S CORNER

### The fight for freedom in Iraq



**Chaplain (Lt, USN) Ronald W. Newhouse**  
9th Communications Battalion Chaplain

When Simon Bolivar led the nation of Peru to independence from Spain in 1924, they pleaded with him to become their first president. He refused. He said that his work was the work of liberation. Others were better suited to the task of governing.

The people still wanted to honor him. So they offered him a gift of one million pesos. And he accepted the gift on one condition. He asked that he might supplement that gift with monies from his own estate, and then use all of that money together to purchase the freedom of the 3,000 individuals in Peru who were still slaves to other men.

When all the slaves were freed, they asked him why he did it. This is what he said: "It makes little sense to free a nation unless all its citizens enjoy freedom as well."

As we work for freedom, we must remember that it is only a tool. It can never be an end in itself. We must use freedom to find dignity. We must use freedom to connect our souls to God's true freedom.

Thanks for being a defender of freedom!

## I MEF honors its fallen in Memorial Day ceremony

### Cpl. Jon Guibord

I Marine Expeditionary Force

**CAMP FALLUJAH, Iraq** - Approximately 400 Marines, sailors and soldiers from several commands under the I Marine Expeditionary Force came together at the Camp Fallujah chapel here to remember their fallen in a Memorial Day service May 29.

The service honored 78 Marines, sailors and soldiers who have lost their lives in Iraq in support of Operation Iraqi Freedom since I MEF took authority from II MEF Feb. 28.

Although a somber occasion, the service which was filled with scripture readings, songs and speeches, was quite lively.

The ceremony's keynote speaker was Commandant of the Marine Corps Gen. Michael W. Hagee, who discussed how service, members can honor their fallen brothers.

"The best way that we can remember them is to continue to live up to the values that they believed in and that they gave their life for," said Hagee.

The hour-long ceremony included musical performances by two choirs, the Camp Fallujah band, bagpipes, and the traditional playing of Taps, which resulted in an array of emotion, from cheering to tearing.

Marines, sailors and soldiers filled Camp Fallujah's chapel from scores of units within I MEF.

As one final salute, the I MEF Headquarters



Cpl. Jon Guibord

Senior Chief Petty Officer Victor L. Koon, the I Marine Expeditionary Force chaplain's office senior enlisted advisor, rings the bell for every Marine, sailor and soldier that has been killed since I MEF took command February 28, 2006.

Group sergeant major, Sgt. Maj. Neil W. O'Connell, read the names of the 78 service members. As each name was called, a bell placed in the middle of the stage was rung as a tribute to the fallen.

"I was impressed with the whole ceremony," said Sgt. Raul C. Garcia, an ammunition technician with Regimental Combat Team 5 Headquarters Company serving his second tour in Iraq. "It gave us one last moment of remembrance for the Marines that have been killed in action here."

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

# Marines repel enemy attack, suicide bomber

**Cpl. Joseph DiGirolamo**  
3rd Battalion, 8th Marine Regiment

**RAMADI, Iraq** - Lance Cpl. William A. Staley is lucky to be alive. "I was running from the chow hall to grab my flak jacket," said Staley, a 24-year-old mortarman from Lockport, N.Y. "Then the explosion hit." Staley recalled the enormous blast that sent debris into his face and knocked him down a flight of stairs.

"After the explosion I got up and began running around making sure everyone was alright," said Staley, a Marine with L Company, 3rd Battalion, 8th Marine Regiment.

He was one of many Marines who survived a powerful explosion from a suicide vehicle that rocked the Veteran Affairs building here in late April.

3rd Platoon, Company L was operating at the Observation Post Veteran Affairs April 17, when the insurgents began a coordinated attack. It was midday when insurgents began firing machine guns and small arms at the building's rooftop.

Meanwhile, teams of insurgents fired multiple rocket-propelled grenades that sailed directly toward the posts.

"The rocket-propelled grenades knocked the Marines physically out of the posts," said 2nd Lt. Andrew J. Sherman, a 25-year-old platoon commander from Mobile, Ala., who was knocked down by an RPG blast. "While the machine gunners were getting back up and running back to the guns, a suicide vehicle-borne improvised explosive device breached the west gate," he said.

Lance Cpl. Aaron C. Shaffer, a 20-year-old from Charleston, W. Va., who was knocked from his post by an RPG blast, was able to see the truck from his rooftop vantage point moments before it detonated.

"I got back to my post and saw the truck and began firing on it," said Shaffer. "I don't remember much after that; all I remember is a handful of dirt slamming me in the face."

The dump truck laden with explosives detonated inside the compound, ripping the northwest corner of the building apart. Massive amounts of debris flew everywhere as flames from the blast ignited the building's camouflage netting surrounding the Marines.

"I thought the whole building was destroyed," said Staley. "The concussion of the blast jolted and knocked (several of us down)."

Moments later, Marines dazed from the barrage of gunfire began receiving mortar rounds that rained down on top of the building.

Marines began low crawling over rubble and under a spray of small arms fire to maneuver to secondary fighting positions, according to Sherman, who was calling for backup support.

They also called for a quick reaction force team. As the QRF sped toward the gunfight, they encountered and destroyed four VBIEDS parked along the road.

Once Petty Officer 3rd Class William T. Corso gained consciousness from the initial blast, he began hearing a call for help.

It was from Lance Cpl. Michael C. Sarbu, who had a gunshot wound to the leg.

Trained in combat lifesaving techniques, Corso quickly ran up a ladder, exposing himself to enemy fire. He reached Sarbu and started treating his leg. He immediately called for medical evacuation and treated two other Marines.

Meanwhile, Lance Cpl. Timothy M. Leeper ran to a secondary post to man a heavy machine gun upon hearing sporadic gunfire. As he was about to reach the post, a car bomb detonated, throwing him back inside the building and burying his weapon under rubble. Refusing medical treatment, he ran to another part of the building to assist Marines that were engaged with enemy fighters. He was able to help the Marines by repairing their weapon systems and resupplying them with ammunition.



Cpl. Joseph DiGirolamo

Cpl. Gary M. Cozine, a 21-year-old infantryman with L Company, 3rd Battalion, 8th Marine Regiment, talks to his Marines on post at observation post Veteran Affairs in western Ramadi, Iraq May 16.

Both Corso and Leeper were recommended for combat awards for their bravery during the complex attack. Several other Marines and Sailors were also put up for awards.

The attack lasted an hour and 45 minutes. The Marines' tenacity was key in repelling the enemy assault.

When it was all said and done, every Marine inside OP VA survived the attack. A few Marines sustained minor injuries, and Sarbu was medically evacuated to a regional medical facility for treatment for his wounds. The Marines reported killing approximately 20 insurgents during the battle.

The next few days were spent refortifying the observation post to ensure it hadn't been weakened by the attack.

"We worked 48 hours straight to reinforce the post," said Staley. "It was a nonstop working party."

Today, the war-torn building still stands, and Marines continue to operate there, providing security for the people of Ramadi.

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# Marine saved by side SAPI

**Cpl. Graham Paulsgrove**

*3rd Light Armored Reconnaissance Battalion*

**GHARMAH, Iraq** - When an optional piece of gear became mandatory, complaints were lodged. But when the gear did its job - saving a Marine's life - a few opinions changed.

Lance Cpl. Robert F. Dean, a light armored vehicle crewman with D Company, 3rd Light Armored Reconnaissance Battalion, owes his life to the small arms protective insert strapped to the side of his body armor when he was shot by an insurgent sniper near the city of Gharmah May 14.

"I thought someone had thrown a rock at me," said Dean, from Spring, Texas.

Dean soon realized it was not a rock, but a bullet fired by an insurgent from roughly 500 meters away.

"We had an area cordoned off, and the scouts were out searching the area," recalled Cpl. Dustin R. Nelson, Dean's vehicle commander. "I reached down to give him some water. As he popped out of his hatch to take it from me, I heard a crack."

The Marines immediately responded to the insurgent attack.

"The bullet would have hit his femoral bone, and possibly gone through and hit his femoral artery," said HN Chad T. Kenyon, 20, the corpsmen who treated Dean after the incident. "If that happened, he could have bled to death within a few minutes. It would have been a sticky situation, but the plates did their job and stopped the bullet."

"The round hit the very bottom of the plate, shattering some of the ceramic, but the fiber paper [backing the plate] caught the round like a baseball mitt," added Nelson, from Grand Junction, Colo.

Marines here are equipped with the interceptor body armor system, which consists of an outer tactical vest made of Kevlar and the small arms protective insert plates. The OTV and associated neck, throat and groin protectors are designed to offer protection from fragmentation weapons.

The ceramic SAPI plates are designed to withstand multiple hits from assault rifles, which are common on the current battlefield. Recently, the side SAPI plates have been added to the armor system.

When the side SAPI plates were originally

issued to the company, Marines with jobs that kept them inside their eight-wheeled vehicles - drivers, gunners and vehicle commanders - could choose whether to wear the plates. Once the unit started operating around Fallujah under Regimental Combat Team 5, wearing the side plates was no longer optional.

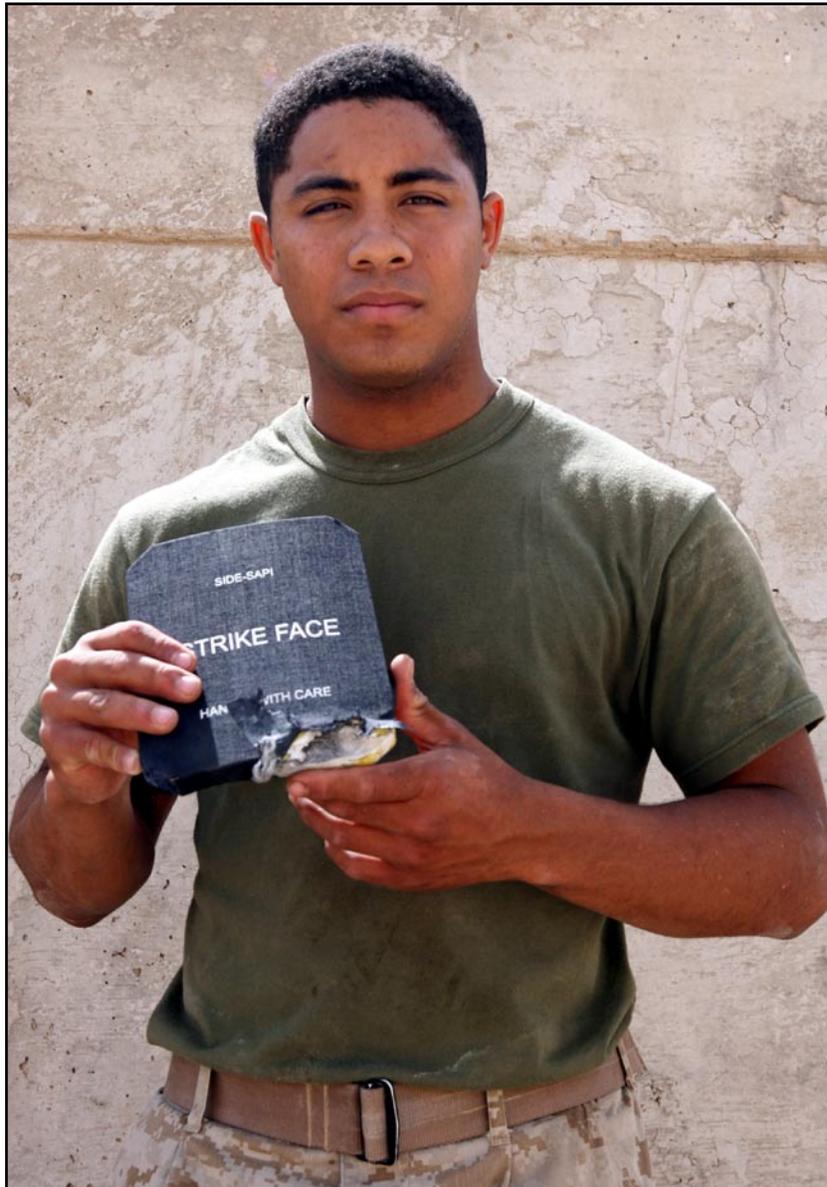
"They make it harder to get in and out of the vehicle, but without them, I would probably be in bad shape," said Dean, 20, about his side SAPI plates. "It was a good thing that they made all of us wear them."

When the gear became mandatory for the Marines, some complained, but have since withdrew their objections after seeing the plates save lives.

"Now, our interpreter wants side SAPIs. Before he was complaining that his flak was too heavy," Nelson said.

The Marine Corps has made several advancements in providing enhanced personal body armor for Marines and sailors deployed to Iraq. The level of protection of individual body armor has increased technology improves, threats in the area evolve.

Advancements include enhanced SAPI plates, which offer greater protection against small caliber weapons, the side SAPI plates, which increase protection on the flanks of the torso, and a new lightweight Kevlar helmet, which offers the same ballistic protection as the previous version but is easier to wear for longer periods of time.



*Cpl. Graham Paulsgrove*

Lance Cpl. Robert F. Dean, a light armored vehicle crewman with D Company, 3rd Light Armored Reconnaissance Battalion, displays the small arms protective insert that protected him from an insurgent sniper's bullet May 14, 2006

**Cpl. Graham Paulsgrove is a combat correspondent serving with 3rd Light Armored Reconnaissance Battalion in Al Anbar Province. For information, e-mail him at [PaulsgroveGA@gcemnf-](mailto:PaulsgroveGA@gcemnf-)**

# MWSS 274 MOTOR-T CO RAGDOLLS A TEST OF WILL



MWSS 274 MOTOR TRANSPORT COMPANY COMMANDER 1ST LT WILL ANDERSON

Lt. Brandon L. Roach

**RANK/NAME:** 1<sup>st</sup> Lt. Will Anderson  
**AGE:** 35  
**HOMETOWN:** Salmon, Idaho  
**MARITAL STATUS:** Married  
**KIDS:** 13 year-old daughter, 9-year-old son  
**COLLEGE STUDIES:** Old Dominion University, History major  
**UNIT/DUTY STATION:** MWSS 274, Cherry Point, North Carolina  
**MOS/JOB:** 0402/ Motor Transport Company Commander  
**FIRST STEPPED ON YELLOW FOOTPRINTS:** July 24, 1989  
**HOW MANY DEPLOYMENTS:** 5  
**FAVORITE HANGOUT:** Deck in the back yard  
**HOBBIES:** Skiing, baseball  
**LAST SONG OR MOVIE DOWNLOADED:** *Fields of Athenry* by Drop Kick Murphys  
**LAST BOOK YOU READ:** *Going After Caciato* by Tim O'Brien  
**FAVORITE MRE:** Thai Chicken  
**FAVORITE PIECE OF GEAR WITH YOU:** Combat

thumb drive!

**WHAT YOU'VE LEARNED DURING DEPLOYMENT:** Meetings beget meetings

**WHAT YOU'LL REMEMBER MOST:** The hardworking "Ragdolls" of Motor-T and their ability to accomplish anything!

**WHERE YOU ARE GOING ON VACATION**

**WHEN YOU REDEPLOY:** Cozumel, Mexico

**WORST PART ABOUT DEPLOYMENT:** Missing my son's baseball season

**WHAT YOUR FAMILY THINKS ABOUT YOUR DEPLOYMENT:** Very supportive

**BEST MEMORY OF MARINE CORPS:** Coming home from Desert Storm

**FAVORITE COMEDIAN:** Carrot-Top

**FAVORITE DUTY STATION:** MCRD San Diego

**FAVORITE QUOTE:** "Nothing wrong with being tired. A whole lot wrong with looking tired!"

**WHAT YOU WILL BE DOING IN 5 YEARS:** Retiring

**ADVICE FOR OTHERS HERE:** Make the best of a great opportunity!



Gunnery Sgt. Mark Oliva

Cpl. Jason L. Campbell, a 21-year-old from Twinsburg, Ohio, searches an Iraqi home in Zaidon for anti-Coalition materials during a recent operation. Recon Marines are using tools and executing missions well beyond the scope of what used to be considered reconnaissance missions.

## Marine recon adapts to growing mission in Iraq

**Gunnery Sgt. Mark Oliva**  
Regimental Combat team 5

**ZAIDON, Iraq** - Cpl. Jason L. Campbell pulled his Kevlar helmet off his head and struggled to get free of his body armor - a tangle of ammunition pouches, ceramic plates, radios and grenades.

It is not an uncommon load for an infantryman here in Iraq. But Campbell's not an ordinary infantryman. He is a Reconnaissance Marine, and he is performing a mission that just 10 years ago would have been unthinkable in Iraq.

"I thought it would be more 'snooping and pooping,'" said 21-year-old Campbell, from Twinsburg, Ohio. "I thought we'd be doing more traditional reconnaissance."

The thing is, in Iraq, nothing is traditional. It's a 4th Generation War - a guerilla war - where there are no front lines for Recon Marines to slip by. Terrain and the counterinsurgency mission do not traditionally call for deep reconnaissance.

Marine reconnaissance is changing. Helmets and flak jacket were unheard of before Operation Iraqi Freedom. Duty in Marine Recon meant boonie covers, bulging rucksacks

and long range foot patrols into the enemy's back yard just a few years ago.

No longer. Recon Marines are wrapped in the same armor as every other Marine, mounted in humvees and firing heavy M-2 .50 caliber machine guns. The heart and soul of reconnaissance work has fundamentally shifted.

For good or ill, Marine Recon will never be the same.

Campbell, assigned to B Company, 2nd Reconnaissance Battalion, Regimental Combat Team 5, admitted this isn't the sort of work he trained for when he completed Amphibious Reconnaissance School. In fact, he's never performed a traditional reconnaissance mission in Iraq.

"The only time I did a traditional recon mission was at ARS," or while deployed with a Marine Expeditionary Unit, he explained. "Not in combat. I've never gone out to do just reconnaissance."

Still, there is no shortage of work for Marines with specialized reconnaissance and intelligence-gathering skills. Just because Recon Marines are not lying in a hide, counting enemy troops, doesn't mean they're out of a mission. In fact, they ran smack dab into the middle of what seems to be the definition of

counterinsurgency operations. Marines gather their own intelligence, coordinate and create targets, and prosecute their own missions, with hard hits on specific targets.

"It used to be in reconnaissance, if you fired a shot, you failed your mission," said Gunnery Sgt. Kenneth A. Westgate, a 35-year-old platoon sergeant for 3rd Platoon, B Company, from East Wareham, Mass. "Now, we're expected to make contact. It's not that we've lost a mission. We've gained more mission."

"We're collecting, analyzing and prosecuting almost all at the platoon level," Westgate said. "The mission we're tasked with now is different."

Some of what Recon Marines are doing in Iraq, Westgate said, used to be traditionally left to Combined Anti-Armor Teams. They perform mounted vehicle patrols with heavy guns and grenade launchers. Westgate - who has 15 years as a Marine - said his early years in Recon never called for humvees.

"I was the guy 10 kilometers in trying to find a route for the humvees," he said. "When I first started, it was boonie covers and heavy rucks. Now it's humvees and heavy machine guns. For the older guys, we've seen the change. But

See Recon Page 9

# LAR maintains security outside Fallujah



Cpl. Graham Paulsgrove

Cpl. Joseph E. Sherwood, a 29-year-old from Orlando, Fla., assigned to D Company, 3rd Light Armored Reconnaissance Battalion, scans a berm for anything unusual during a patrol. The Marines maintain security and stability in Gharmah, Iraq, a farming town outside of Fallujah.

## Cpl. Graham Paulsgrove

3rd Light Armored Reconnaissance Battalion

**GHARMAH, Iraq** - They are fast, lethal, and quickly working themselves out of a job.

Marines of D Company, 3rd Light Armored Reconnaissance Battalion are clearing this small town north of Fallujah of insurgents and training Iraqi soldiers to operate independently at the same time. They're doing it all with their light armored vehicles, eight-wheeled vehicles they eat in and sleep in and use to maintain security and stability in their area of operations.

The company's main priority is keeping the roads through the town secure from insurgents and free of improvised explosive devices, according to 2nd Lt. Court M. Rape, a 23-year-old platoon commander.

"The main route in our area of operation has a lot of insurgent traffic running to Baghdad and Ramadi, transporting personnel and weapons, because it has fewer checkpoints," Rape said.

The Marines operate out of LAVs, a vehicle capable of traversing all types of terrain, traveling at more than 70 mph. It's not just a speed-demon, though. It's brimming to the teeth with a 240G machine gun and a 25mm cannon. Top that off with infantry scouts in back - the linchpin to the company's success.

Locals see a sign of strength and speed, and insurgents see a rolling death threat.

"We can go everywhere a tank can go, but we have enough fuel to drive for a week," said Lance Cpl. Mark Efimoff, from

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**"We are fast, mobile, have scouts on the ground and heavy fire power right there. LAVs are a quick, self-sustaining force."**

Lance Cpl. Mark Efimoff  
LAV crewman

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Woodburn, Ore. "We are fast, mobile, have scouts on the ground and heavy fire power right there. LAVs are a quick, self-sustaining force."

D Company's platoons leave their home base of Camp Fallujah for several days at a time, roaming their 60-square-kilometer area, mainly covered by farmland, but dotted with a few villages.

They never really take a break, either. Even when they're not running down the road, they're ready to fight, coiled in a 360-degree security perimeter while the Marines take turns sleeping and grabbing a bite to eat,

according Efimoff.

In addition to keeping the roads safe, the company - working in direct support of 1st Battalion, 1st Marine Regiment - is conducting counterinsurgency operations, finding weapons caches, and working alongside the Iraqi Army.

"The Iraqi soldiers are a great asset," said Rape, from College Station, Texas. "Instead of our one interpreter, we have about 18 guys who can communicate with the Iraqi people, making their presence known and giving us the heads up on insurgent activities."

The Iraqi Army is slated to take responsibility for select areas of Iraq starting at the end of this year and recently recruited more than 1,000 men from the Fallujah area. The close work with Iraqis is surprising even the harshest of Marine critics.

"I had my expectations of how they would perform before I saw them, but they came out and impressed us," said Sgt. Timothy Redleaf, a vehicle commander from Rapid City, S.D. "They are here to make a difference."

While the operations conducted with the Iraqis have not been on a large scale, they have shown promise in what they can offer.

"Our Marines will fight beside them without reservation in any conflict," said Capt. H. Ripley Rawlings IV, the company commander, from Boulder, Colo. "If all of the Iraqi platoons are like the ones we have operated with, then the IA will be a force worthy of deploying with Marines. When the time is right, they will be ready to take over this province - and that time is approaching quickly."

After operating in the area for roughly two months, the Marines proved their capabilities as a fighting force. Insurgent attacks in the area are down from just a couple months ago.

Prior to their arrival just weeks ago, the region experienced insurgent attacks every day, including small arms fire, IEDs, rocket attacks and ambushes. Now, it has ceased, according to Rawlings.

"Our enemy is very focused and determined, but ... we have degraded and defeated the enemy to the point where they stopped attacking us," Rawlings explained. "The last few days have been very quiet."

"We are winning this war, and Iraq's time as a free and sovereign democratic nation is just around the corner," he added.

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## Recon from Page 7

we've got a whole generation of Recon who thinks reconnaissance is humvees and flak jackets."

Westgate isn't saying that the Corps abandoned traditional reconnaissance, rather the mission has to adapt to stay relevant to the war Marines are fighting.

"The pace of warfare has changed," Westgate said.

The nature of this war – the 4th Generation War where insurgents do not openly confront Marines in classic force-on-force warfare – means the Corps is relying on the skills of Marines just like those in 2nd Reconnaissance Battalion.

"It's still the same principles," said Cpl. Brandon M. Stair, a 25-year-old from Utica, Ohio, assigned to B Company. "We're still working in our teams, but moving more toward platoon operations. We're still thinking out of the box. This is still a guerilla war."

Snipers in Recon units are still making

precise shots against insurgents, but gathering intelligence and packaging that information is happening at an arm's distance, instead of hundreds of meters through binoculars. Marines patrol villages – micro urban areas – talking with villagers, finding out what they know. Recon Marines are part beat cop, keeping the peace. They're part investigator, putting together the puzzle, and part SWAT, kicking down the door to snatch the bad guys.

That has required Recon Marines to learn new skill sets. To be humvee-mobile, Marines need to learn humvee maintenance. Heavy guns once foreign to Recon teams are now a standard package. It makes them more lethal and more mobile, but requires more flexibility and ingenuity.

"We now have our own built-in fire support," Westgate explained. "We have much more supply with us on the humvees instead of what we used to carry in our rucks. We can move longer distances quicker. The disadvantage is there is a greater logistics train and we're sometimes restricted by terrain."

Marines do not feel they are at a disadvantage as the taskings are forcing change. They take the skills they have and apply them differently.

"For me, it's seamless," Campbell said. "This sort of mission is what I expected to do anyway. It could be a great advantage for us because we are a small unit and have the flexibility. We can still do reconnaissance and can act on it ourselves."

The shift in the definition of reconnaissance from what was considered traditional to observing, gathering, processing and prosecuting their own missions has morphed Recon Marines into a unit that is more independent, faster and deadlier.

"What we've done is put another tool in our toolbox," Westgate said. "But we've also put another mission in our pack."

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# GIRLS SCOUTS GIVE MARINES A TASTE OF HOME



Cpl. Brian Reimers

Lt. Col. Christopher A. Landro, battalion commander, 1st Battalion, 25th Marine Regiment, Regimental Combat Team 5, helps sort through more than 1,600 boxes of Girl Scout cookies donated by his daughter's troop for the Marines.

## Cpl. Brian Reimers

1st Battalion, 25th Marine Regiment

**CAMP BAHARIA, Iraq** - Things that remind Marines of home are sometimes hard to come by out here. But with the help of a few hardworking Girl Scouts and patriotic citizens, Marines are enjoying a familiar stateside treat.

A group of Girl Scouts from Marietta, Ga., recently donated more than 1,600 boxes of their famous cookies to 1st Battalion, 25th Marine Regiment, Regimental Combat Team 5.

"We wanted to give the Marines something special," said 6-year-old Megan L. Landro, daughter of Lt. Col. Christopher A. Landro, "New England's Own" battalion commander.

The scouts adopted the commander to be their "Hometown Hero" and set a goal to sell enough cookies so every Marine in the battalion would have a box. They reached their goal and then some.

"I was thrilled to hear that they had reached their goal and I immediately promised to get them out to the Marines as quickly as possible," said Landro, from Kennesaw, Ga.

Troop 2923 went door to door with a poster of their hometown hero and his Marines, asking people if they would like to buy cookies for the troops operating in Fallujah.

"Everybody wanted to buy them for my dad and his troops," said Megan, a first grade student at Walker School in Marietta.

"I know that my family is going through a very tough time without me, as is every

family," said 46-year-old Landro. "But this shows that they will do anything they can to express their love and support so that we can go on with our mission."

The expression of gratitude wasn't lost on the Marines.

"One way or another, the people back home are always finding ways to support us," said Lance Cpl. Cody W. Hill, Headquarters Platoon, Weapons Company.

Company commanders spent a part of their afternoon loading boxes and boxes of cookies into their humvees to take back to their Marines throughout the battalion's area of operation.

"It was awesome to see hundreds of boxes of Girl Scout cookies show up to our door," said Hill, 22, from Ada, Okla. "I have never seen so many cookies in my life. I now know of every type of Girl Scout cookie that there is."

Megan made sure that her dad would get plenty of the cookies they both enjoy the most.

"My daddy loves the thin mint ones," Megan excitedly said. "I sent him some extra ones."

"I have more Girl Scout cookies here than I know what to do with," Hill said. "I am pretty sure that we will not need a resupply for quite a while. Thanks so much to the girls that made this happen."

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*Cpl. Brian Reimers is a combat correspondent serving with 1st Battalion, 25th Marine Regiment in Al Anbar Province. For information, e-mail him at [ReimersBJ@gcsmnf-wiraq.usmc.mil](mailto:ReimersBJ@gcsmnf-wiraq.usmc.mil).*

# Sea Stallions implement ramp-mounted weapon system

**Lance Cpl. James B. Hoke**  
3rd Marine Aircraft Wing

**AL ASAD, Iraq** - Cruising over the desert at just above 400 feet, a Marine crew chief kneels behind the Gun Ammunition Unit 21 mounted on the ramp of the CH-53D Sea Stallion helicopter. The pilots and crew chiefs in the front of the aircraft relay the location of the current target, which will be coming into his field of fire within seconds.

A series of smoke clouds and loud pops emit from the barrel of the .50-caliber machine gun, as a succession of tracer rounds, appearing like lasers from some flashy science fiction movie, slam into makeshift targets of old vehicles on the desert dunes.

Marine Heavy Helicopter Squadron 463, Marine Aircraft Group 16 (Reinforced), 3rd Marine Aircraft Wing, is the first CH-53D helicopter squadron to install the GAU-21 .50-caliber machine gun system onto their aircraft.

"The GAU-21 is very similar to the XM-218 .50-caliber, which is the machine gun that is mounted on the doors of the aircraft," said Cpl. Thomas D. Martinez, crew chief and weapons and tactics instructor, HMH-463. "Most people can't really tell the difference until they know a little bit about them. It is a new system to the Marine Corps. The XM-218 has been around forever, but the GAU-21 is modified to fire faster and fire slightly farther."

Purchased in January 2004, the Marine Corps first tested the weapon system on the CH-53E Super Stallions before moving to the aircraft's little brother, the Delta.

"It was passed on to the Deltas and tested in Hawaii," said Martinez, a 22-year-old Durango, Colo., native. "We got the clearance to fire the tail gun from the Delta platform in



Lance Cpl. James B. Hoke

Cpl. Thomas D. Martinez aims at a makeshift target in the desert outside Al Asad, Iraq during a test fire of the GAU-21 ramp-mounted weapon system May 16.

December last year. We chose to use the GAU-21 as the ramp system because of its ability to put more rounds down range. All we had to do was modify our ramp in order to facilitate it."

The GAU-21 was chosen over the XM-218 for its safer operability and the M-240G machine gun for the size and path of its rounds, said Cpl. Mitchell C. J. Harquail, crew chief and weapons and tactics instructor, HMH-463.

"The 7.62 round used in the M-240G is too small," said Harquail, a 26-year-old native of Sea Side, New Brunswick, Canada. "The rotor wash from the aircraft affects the rounds' trajectory. The .50-caliber is a heavier round. You need a heavy round with a higher volume."

However, between the added heat from the engines blowing through the rear of the aircraft and the added gravity from the aircraft turning or banking, this new weapon system takes a toll on the Marines who operate it.

"You get really tired when you are on that gun, as it creates a lot of fatigue," said Harquail, a graduate of Dalhousie Regional High School. "You have to shoot from the kneeling or squatting positions and hang off of the ramp of the aircraft sometimes. There is a lot more vibration and movement in the tail of the aircraft. It gets really hot back there, as well."

Although the GAU-21 can put a tremendous amount of

physical stress on experienced crew chiefs, the importance of the weapon does not fade from their sight.

"We are normally engaged by the enemy from the rear of the aircraft," said Martinez, a Durango High School graduate. "These weapons are important because our window guns only give us coverage in less than a 180 degree angle in front. The tail gun provides 180 degrees of coverage behind and to the sides of the aircraft."

Another feature the weapon system provides is safety, according to Harquail, who was the first designated tail gunner for the CH-53D platform with the GAU-21.

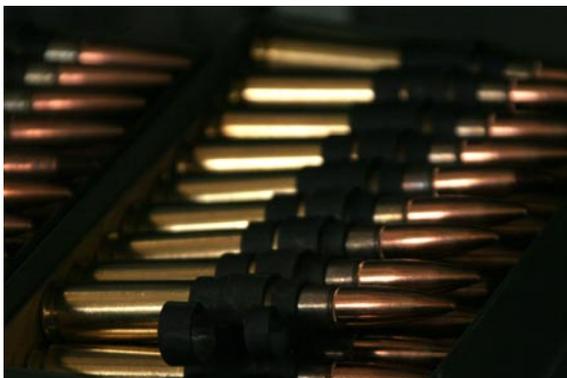
"It is more user friendly and safer," said Harquail. "The likelihood of a cook-off, which is the igniting of a round caused by the heat of an extremely hot barrel, is greatly reduced, because the weapon fires from an open bolt position."

With a rate of fire almost 400 rounds per minute faster than its older brother, the XM-218, the Marines who operate this weapon cannot get enough of it.

"I love it," Harquail said. "The weapon has a sweet spot that once you get used to it, you can hit almost anything."

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Lance Cpl. James B. Hoke

Fifty-caliber rounds are taken from normal 100-round ammo cans, laid out flat and linked together before being put in the 300-round ammo can that the GAU-21 ramp-mounted weapon system uses.

## Warriors' Words

# What is your favorite saying?

*"Long days make for fast weeks."*



Cpl. Mark K. Riggio  
I Marine Expeditionary Force  
Headquarters Group

*"Take it one day at a time."*



Sgt. Jerrad E. Fienhold  
Combat Logistics Battalion 5

*"It is better to die on your feet than to live a lifetime on your knees."*



Sgt. Ruben M. Pena  
Regimental Combat Team 5  
Headquarters

*"It's all good."*



Lance Cpl. Marcus B. Leed  
Regimental Combat Team 5  
Headquarters

*"Dude!"*



Pfc. Raul J. Levrie  
1st Battalion, 1st Marine  
Regiment



Cpl. Jon C. Guibord

# What is your perception of risk?

## Scott Martin

MNF-W Director of Safety

We've all done it. Stretched the envelope of common sense, or said to another Marine, sailor or soldier, "Watch this ..."

But life isn't the movies, where the hero leaps from a third story ledge into garbage bags and rolls to their feet, ready to chase the bad guys. Reality has a way of breaking bones, scraping your skin off, or making you see three of everything when there used to be one. Our decision-making process is heavily influenced by our perception of risk.

Risk perception is the colored lens we look through when viewing the world. You may look at the ocean with some hesitation, with shades of the movies "Jaws" or "Open Water" dancing about in your brain, while another person will race into the water unconcerned about being fish food. Our ratio of risk verses gain is formed mostly by our experiences and whether we feel like we are "controlling" the situation. You are more likely to have a vehicle accident than a plane crash, but the greater worry for most people is flying. This is due to what level of control you feel. Whatever is driving your train, take a second and think about what you are planning to do.

As individuals, we must consider what we are doing, or about to do, and weigh the risks involved. It's not about stopping you from doing what you need to do; it's

about increasing the possibility that you will complete your mission without something going wrong. Before you start to do something, take that second to consider three things: (1) What possibly can go wrong? (2) How bad can it be? (3) What can I do to prevent that from happening? These three questions might be the only thing between you and needing both hands to count to five.

How do we avoid the hazards of our daily missions? We do this with prior planning. Operational Risk Management (ORM) is an integral part of that planning process. Okay, I'll pause now for the collective groan about ORM... there, now we can continue, because it is an important tool that we need to use. As a matter of fact, we all have been using it since we were kids when mom told us to stay out of the street and to look both ways. Looking at what you are going to do and planning for those things that reasonably might happen is called "calculated risk-taking". Going into something without regard for potential hazards is "gambling". What's the difference? The difference is measured in loss of combat power and possibly mission failure due to deaths, injuries, and loss of equipment.

How hard is it to apply ORM? Maintain your situational awareness. Plan your actions whenever possible and include ORM. Carpenters have a saying that goes like this: "Measure twice, cut once". In other words, plan properly and you won't waste time fixing your mistakes... if they're fixable

# Snap Shots

From the Front

**CAMP FALLUJAH, Iraq** - Sgt. Mark W. Fitzwater, 23, from Avon, N.Y., and Cpl. Jonathan "Blake" Little, 20, from Bennett, N.C., prepare to heat a package of dried noodles in the back of their assault amphibian vehicle during a company operation north of Fallujah March 13. Both Marines are assault amphibian vehicle crewmen with the North Carolina-based A Company, 2nd Assault Amphibian Battalion. The company ran around-the-clock missions during the eight-day operation.



1st Lt. Nathan Braden



**KHANDARI, Iraq** - A young Iraqi girl peers from her home as Iraqi police patrol the market with Marines from C Company, 1st Battalion, 1st Marine Regiment.

Cpl. William Skelton



Cpl. Daniel J. Redding

**CAMP TAQADDUM, Iraq** - The surgeons at Taqaddum Surgical are never quite sure what type of injuries they will see here, as they help staff the main medical facility of its kind in the region.



Staff Sgt. Chad McMeen

**AL ASAD, Iraq** - Sgt. Jason M. Nuckles spikes a volleyball at Cpl. Daniel F. Ahmed as Sgt. Cesar Romero watches with hope during a weekly scheduled game March 19, 2006. All three Marines are assigned to Marine Wing Headquarters Squadron 3, 3rd Marine Aircraft Wing.

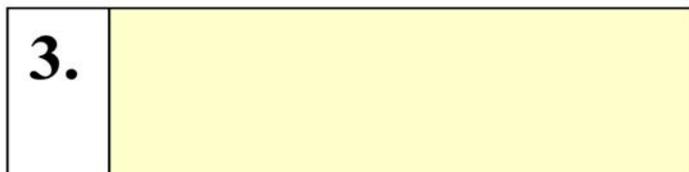


Cpl. Joseph DiGirolamo

**RAMADI, Iraq** - Marines from 3rd Battalion, 8th Marine Regiment gather to pay their last respects to Lance Cpl. Richard Z. James. The 20-year-old from Seaford, Del., was killed May 13 while conducting combat operations here.

# Am I Hydrated?

## Urine Color Chart



This urine color chart is a simple tool you can use to assess if you are drinking enough fluids throughout the day to stay hydrated.

If your urine matches the color numbers 1, 2, or 3 you are hydrated.

If your urine matches the colors numbered 4 through 8 you are dehydrated and need to drink more fluid.

Be Aware! If you are taking single vitamin supplements or a multivitamin supplement, some of the vitamins in the supplements can change the color of your urine for a few hours, making it bright yellow or discolored.

If you are taking a vitamin supplement, you may need to check your hydration status using another tool like Handout #15 Hydration Check: Body Weight Log.