

FLIGHT JACKET

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Marine Corps Air Station Miramar, Calif.

April 2, 2012



Taking over physical education

Marines hold
physical fitness
challenge



Marines, sailors shed blood for others

Naval Medical Center San Diego held a Blood Donor Center blood drive. NMCS D corpsmen hold blood drives four times a week.

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Marines show students robotics are the 'bomb'

Explosive Ordnance Disposal Marines demonstrated to children from Poway Unified School District at Bernardo Heights High School robotic technology used to safely dispose of dangerous explosives.

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Gunfighters aid 1st LAR insertion

Marines with Marine Light Attack Helicopter Squadron 369 aboard Camp Bastion, Afghanistan provided close-air-support for Marines on the ground

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Maj. Gen. Andrew O'Donnell Jr.
Commanding General
3rd Marine Aircraft Wing



Col. Frank A. Richie
Commanding Officer
MCAS Miramar

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The editorial content is edited, prepared and provided by the Public Affairs Office. Comments or questions should be directed to 858-577-6000.



McDonalds holds grand opening for Marines, families



Mya Pena, winner of a new bicycle, poses for a photo with Ronald McDonald during McDonald's grand opening ceremony. Numerous prizes were given out throughout the day. (Courtesy photo)

ON THE COVER:

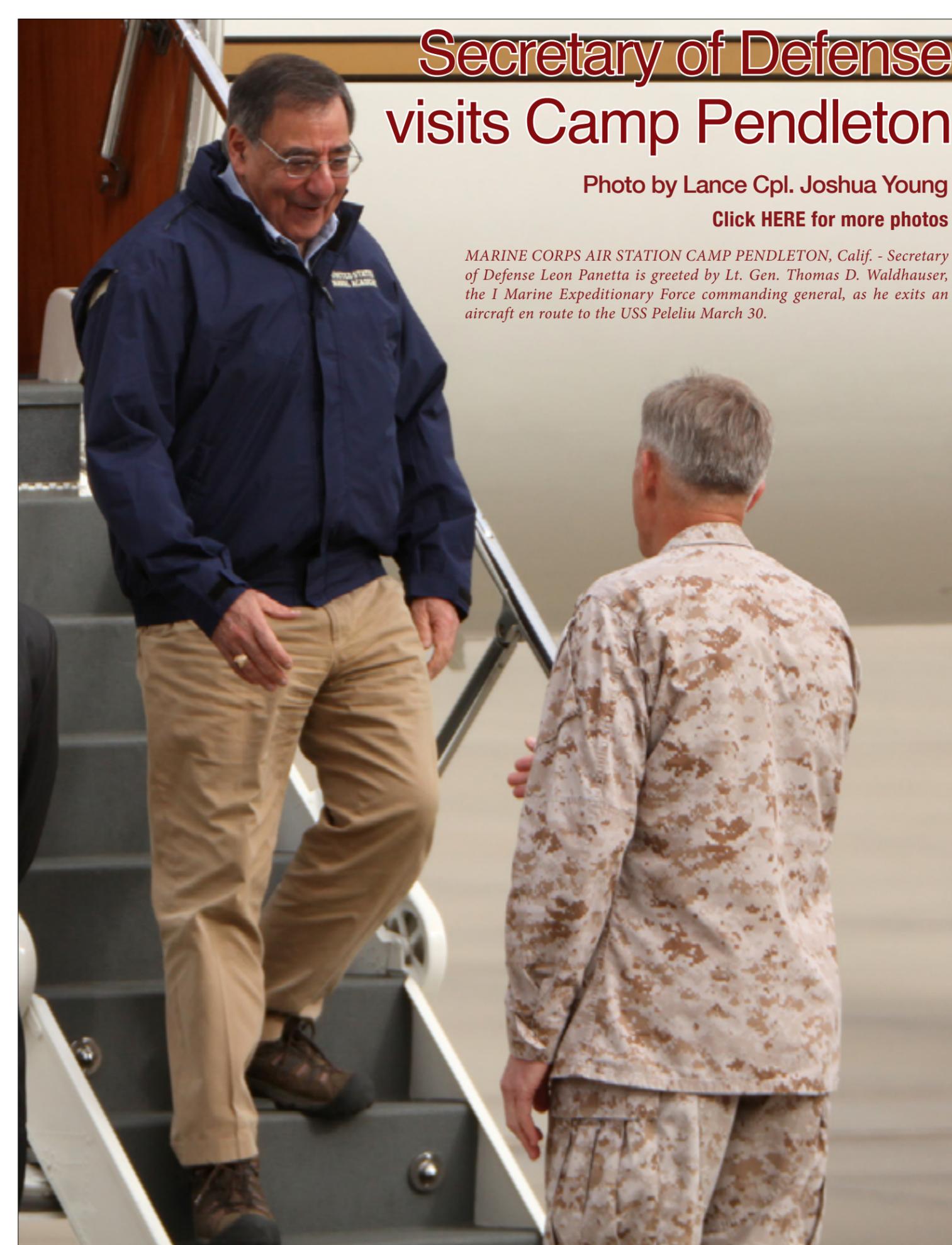
SAN DIEGO – Lance Cpl. Nicholas Burkhardt, an intelligence analyst with Marine Heavy Helicopter Squadron 465 and a Hailey, Idaho native, helps students in a game of tug-of-war during a physical education fitness challenge with De Portola Middle School, March 23. (Photo by Lance Cpl. Christopher Johns)

Secretary of Defense visits Camp Pendleton

Photo by Lance Cpl. Joshua Young

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MARINE CORPS AIR STATION CAMP PENDLETON, Calif. - Secretary of Defense Leon Panetta is greeted by Lt. Gen. Thomas D. Waldhauser, the I Marine Expeditionary Force commanding general, as he exits an aircraft en route to the USS Peleliu March 30.



Spring festival attracts service members, families



Marines volunteer at the face-painting booth during the Annual Spring Festival here March 31. MCCS put on the event to bring families together and to showcase what the Marine Corps Exchange has to offer. (Photo by Sgt. Lauren Henson)



Marine Corps Exchange workers hand out complimentary flowers to Marines and families during the Annual Spring Festival here March 31. MCCS put on the event to help bring families together and showcase what the exchange has to offer. (Photo by Sgt. Lauren Henson)



Marines and families gather at the Marine Corps Exchange for the Annual Spring Festival here March 31. MCCS sponsored the event, which had different activities for not only children but adults as well. (Photo by Sgt. Lauren Henson)



Petty Officer 2nd Class Wilbert G. Endoso, a hospital corpsman with Naval Medical Center San Diego Blood Donor Center and a National City, Calif., native, removes a needle from the arm of Sgt. Louis A. Lockare, the legal assistance chief with Headquarters and Headquarters Squadron and an Elkton, Md., native, during a Blood Donor Center blood drive here March 27. NMCS D corpsmen hold blood drives at various military installations throughout Southern California four times a week.



Marine Corps Air Station Miramar, Calif., hosted a Blood Donor Center blood drive March 27. The Naval Medical Center San Diego's Blood Mobile visits multiple military installations throughout Southern California each week for donations. Every pint donated can save as many as three lives. For more information on donation locations, visit <http://www.militaryblood.dod.mil/>.



The number of blood samples increased as each hour passed during a Blood Donor Center blood drive here March 27. The Naval Medical Center San Diego Blood Donor Center's Blood Mobile visits four military installations throughout Southern California each week for donations.

Marines, sailors shed blood for others

Photos by Lance Cpl. Erica DiSalvo



Members of the 2012 Food and Beverage Conference tour the flight line here March 27.



Master Sgt. Ricardo Rivera, the staff non-commissioned officer in charge at Gonzales Hall and a Rio Piedras, Puerto Rico, native, speaks to conference members of the 2012 Food and Beverage Conference here March 27.



Members of the 2012 Food and Beverage Conference listen to a brief about Gonzales Hall here March 27. The tour also consisted of a brief from the commanding officer and a tour of the flight line.



Members of the 2012 Food and Beverage Conference tour the flight line aboard Marine Corps Air Station Miramar, Calif., March 27. The conference members visited MCAS Miramar to learn about and see first-hand the sustainable energy aboard the air station, one of the Department of Defense's pilot installations for green initiatives.



Members of the 2012 Food and Beverage Conference take photos of crash fire and rescue trucks on the flight line aboard Marine Corps Air Station Miramar, Calif., March 27. The conference members visited MCAS Miramar to learn about and see first-hand the sustainable energy aboard the air station, one of the Department of Defense's pilot installations for green initiatives.

VISITORS TO THE AIR STATION: 2012 FOOD AND BEVERAGE CONFERENCE TOURS MIRAMAR

PHOTOS BY LANCE CPL. CHRISTOPHER JOHNS

Station personnel receive recognition

Photo by Lance Cpl. Christopher Johns

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Fire Chief James Magill, center left, presents Col. Frank A. Richie, center, the commanding officer of Marine Corps Air Station Miramar, Calif., with a plaque in honor of the fire station's new accreditation from the Commission on Fire Accreditation International here March 22. Two other fire fighters, Victor Rodriguez and Adam Martinez, were recognized for safely delivering a 3-weeks premature baby aboard the air station.





Lt. Col. Stephen M. Griffiths, left, the Headquarters and Headquarters Squadron commanding officer, presents a certificate of commendation to Aurora Fernandez, right, the project manager for Gonzales Hall and a Tijuana, Mexico, native, here March 28.



Col. Frank A. Richie, right, the base commanding officer, and Lt. Col. Stephen M. Griffiths, left, the Headquarters and Headquarters Squadron commanding officer, pose with Aurora Fernandez, center left, the project manager of Gonzales Mess Hall and a Tijuana, Mexico, native, and Andrew Place, center right, the general manager and a Rochester, N.Y., native, here March 28. Richie and Griffiths came to speak to Marines and civilians working with Gonzales Hall, and to award certificates of commendation to Fernandez and Place.

‘Best of the West’ recognized

Photos by Lance Cpl. Christopher Johns

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Col. Frank A. Richie, right, the base commanding officer, speaks to Lance Cpl. Luke Yost, left, a chief cook at Gonzales Hall and a Shamokin, Pa., native, and Lance Cpl. William Cook, center, the training non-commissioned officer and a Rochester, Mich., native, both with Gonzales Hall here March 28. Both Marines received personal thanks from Richie for hard work and dedication during the competition.



CAMP BASTION, Afghanistan - Passengers board a Royal Air Force HC3 Merlin helicopter at the newly christened United Kingdom rotary passenger handling facility here March 26. Brig. Gen. Gregg A. Sturdevant, commanding general of 3rd Marine Aircraft Wing (Forward), and Group Captain Jock Brown, commander of the U.K.'s Task Force Jaguar, were on hand to celebrate the refurbishment of the terminal.

Updated UK facility increases joint US, UK efforts in Afghanistan

Photos by Cpl. Lisa Tourtelot with 3rd Marine Aircraft Wing Forward
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CAMP BASTION, Afghanistan - Brig. Gen. Gregg A. Sturdevant, commanding general of 3rd Marine Aircraft Wing (Forward), addresses United Kingdom and American troops after unveiling the grand opening plaque for the newly refurbished U.K. rotary passenger handling facility here March 26.



CAMP BASTION, Afghanistan - U.S. service members board an Air Force HH-60G Pave Hawk helicopter at the newly christened United Kingdom rotary passenger handling facility here March 26. Brig. Gen. Gregg A. Sturdevant, commanding general of 3rd Marine Aircraft Wing (Forward), and Group Captain Jock Brown, commander of the U.K.'s Task Force Jaguar, were on hand to celebrate the refurbishment of the terminal. The updates feature dual refueling points. U.S. and U.K. aircraft typically refuel on opposite sides; the dual fuel points increase efficiency and collaboration between the two nations.



Vendors set up product booths during a National Conference Services Inc. technology exposition here March 29. Twenty-five vendors from across the U.S. gathered to showcase their newest products, including radio modules, computer software and robotics, to Marines whose units may be future customers. (Photo by Sgt. Lauren Henson)

From the showroom to the battlefield technology expo comes to Miramar

Story by Sgt. Lauren Henson

The Officers Club hosted a technology exposition aboard Marine Corps Air Station Miramar, Calif., March 29.

Twenty-five vendors from across the United States gathered to showcase their newest products, including radio modules, computer software and robotics.

National Conference Services Inc., a company based out of Baltimore, hosts the event annually aboard the air station.

“The goal of the technology expo [was to] bring hope of new solutions to everyday problems,” said Kristan Hawkins, the event manager and a Baltimore native. “It’s nice to have an on-site technology expo, because everybody can come and see this for free.”

The event also served as a chance for the vendors to network with Marines that are in charge of future unit purchases.

The expo is a way for technology companies to meet on-site with those who recognize current equipment problems and have purchasing power within various units aboard the air station, explained Hawkins.

This annual exposition also allowed Marines to view technologies that may be implemented in the future at their units.

For more information on upcoming military installation technology expos visit <http://www.govevents.com/profile/4938/national-conference-services-inc-ncsi>.

HMH-465 ‘Warhorse’ welcomes new commander

Lt. Col. Eric A. Gillis is scheduled to relinquish command of Marine Heavy Helicopter Squadron 465 “Warhorse” to Lt. Col. Lee A. Cracknell in a change of command ceremony aboard Marine Corps Air Station Miramar, Calif., April 5.

Gillis graduated from Sam Houston State University in Huntsville, Texas in August 1992 and was commissioned as a second lieutenant through the Platoon Leaders Class. Following his designation as a naval aviator in September 1995, he reported to Marine Heavy Helicopter Training Squadron 302 at MCAS Tustin, Calif., for training in the CH-53E.

Gillis then reported for duty with HMH-361, where he served as flight equipment officer, training officer, and Marine Aircraft Group 36 frag officer during the squadron’s Unit Deployment Program to Okinawa, Japan from October 1996 to May 1997.

In November 1997, he transferred to HMH-466 in order to join Marine Medium Helicopter Squadron 163 (Reinforced) 15th Marine Expeditionary Unit (Special Operations Capable) in December 1997. Upon his return to HMH-466, he served as the logistics officer.

In July 1999, Gillis transferred to MCAS Camp Pendleton, serving as the air officer and forward air controller for 1st Battalion, 4th Marines. He then deployed on WestPac in January 2000.

Following his tour with the battalion, he joined HMH-465 where he served as the squadron Naval Air Training and Operating Procedures Standardization program officer until transferring in February 2001 to HMM-163 (Rein.) as the squadron logistics officer for 15th MEU (SOC) WestPac. During this period, he deployed to support combat missions in Southern Afghanistan.

After returning in March 2002, Gillis went back to “Warhorse,” where he was promoted to major and became the operations officer. In January 2003, he deployed with the squadron aboard the USS Boxer to support combat operations in Iraq as part of Landing Forces West.

Upon departing HMH-465 in

September 2003, he then reported to HMT-302 at MCAS New River, N.C., as an instructor pilot where he served in several billets, to include the CH-53E fleet evaluator and the maintenance officer.

In November 2005, Gillis reported back to MAG-16 to assume the duties of HMH-462 executive officer and deployed the next July as the officer-in-charge for the CH-53E detachment to HMM-265 (Rein.) supporting the 31st MEU in Okinawa, Japan.

In October of 2007, Gillis was frocked to his current rank to assume the duties of MAG-16 operations officer. In January of 2008, MAG-16 deployed to Al Asad Air Base in Iraq as part of the 3rd Marine Aircraft Wing and I Marine Expeditionary Force rotation supporting operations in Iraq.

Upon his return, he reported to II MEF operations, Marine Corps Base Camp Lejeune, N.C., and assumed duties as the II MEF force deployment officer/force deployment planning and execution OIC from October of 2008 to April 2010 before returning to MAG-16 to await command.

He then took command of HMH-465 in September 2010. His personal awards include the Meritorious Service Medal, Air Medal with numeral 4 and Combat “V” and the Navy and Marine Corps Commendation Medal with three gold stars.

Cracknell graduated from Norwich University in Northfield, Vt., in 1994 and was commissioned as a second lieutenant in June 1994.

Upon graduation from The Basic School, he completed Aviation Preflight Indoctrination at Naval Air Station, Pensacola, Fla., followed by fixed wing initial and intermediate training at Training Squadron 28 at NAS Corpus Christi, Texas, and rotary wing advanced training with Helicopter Training Squadron 18 at NAS Whiting Field, Fla. He was designated a naval aviator in November 1997.

In July 1998, Cracknell reported to HMH-465 at MCAS Tustin and moved with the squadron to MCAS Miramar shortly afterward. He then joined HMM-165 (Rein.) in Decem-

ber 1998 for an 11th MEU (SOC) deployment aboard the USS Peleliu.

During the deployment, he served as an logistics officer and participated in exercises in the United Arab Emirates, Saudi Arabia and in joint humanitarian operations in East Timor during Operation Stabilize. Upon return from the deployment, he returned to HMH-465 and served as the adjutant and administration OIC.

In February 2001, Cracknell joined HMM-163 (Rein.) as the quality assurance officer for a 15th MEU (SOC) deployment. During the deployment, he participated in humanitarian operations in East Timor and in operations supporting Task Force 58 in Pakistan and Afghanistan. Upon return from the deployment, he returned to HMH-465 and transferred to HMH-361.

Cracknell graduated from Weapons and Tactics Instructor course and served as the assistant operations officer and squadron WTI in November 2002. In March 2003, he was transferred to MAG-16 operations to deploy with Amphibious Task Force-West to Iraq, serving as a current operations officer and planner. He returned early in order to redeploy with HMH-361 to Okinawa, Japan to serve as the CH-53E Detachment WTI (with HMM-265(Rein.) 31st MEU (SOC) for the fall patrol aboard USS Essex.

In April 2004, he attended the aviation safety officer course and completed the Beechcraft C-12 Huron training enroute to MCAS Iwakuni, Japan. He served in various billets throughout the station, including station aviation safety officer and a UC-12F Instructor.

In April 2007, Cracknell served two rotations as an instructor/evaluator at the Officer Candidates School in Quantico, Va., before attending resident Command & Staff College. In June 2008, he completed the school and earned a Master of Military Studies from the Marine Corps University.

Cracknell then rejoined HMH-465 in September 2008 as the operations officer and executive officer. In January 2010, he deployed with HMM-265 (Rein.) as the detachment



Lt. Col. Eric A. Gillis



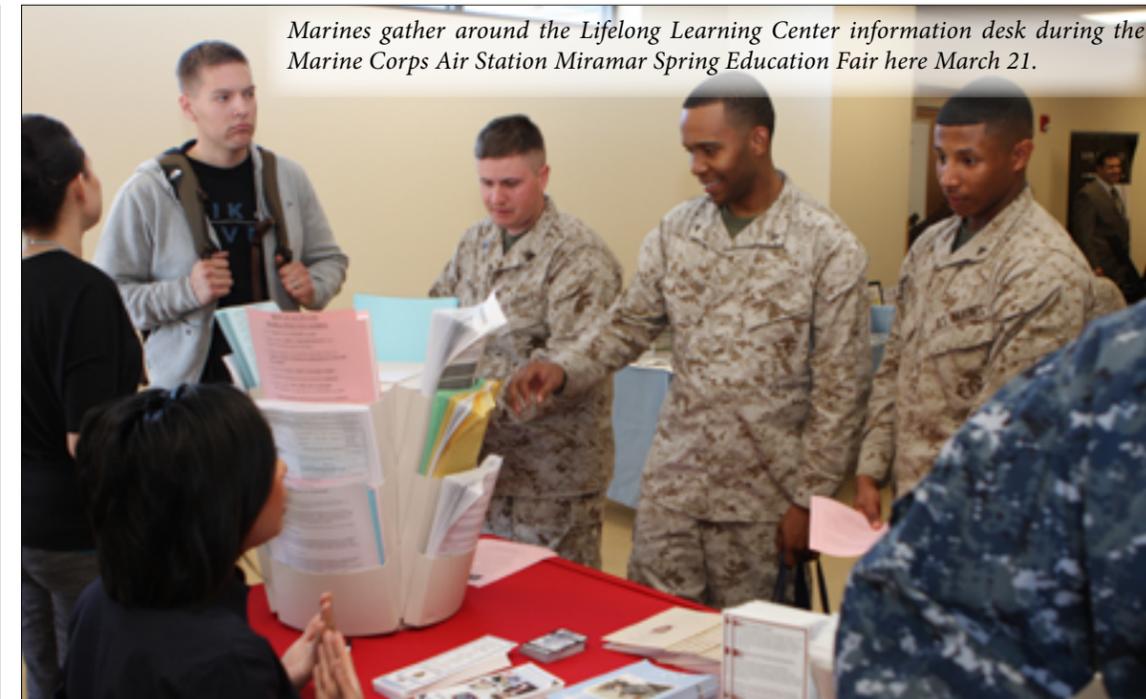
Lt. Col. Lee A. Cracknell

OIC and squadron maintenance officer for the 31st MEU aboard USS Essex. During this deployment, he participated in bilateral exercises in Thailand and the Philippines.

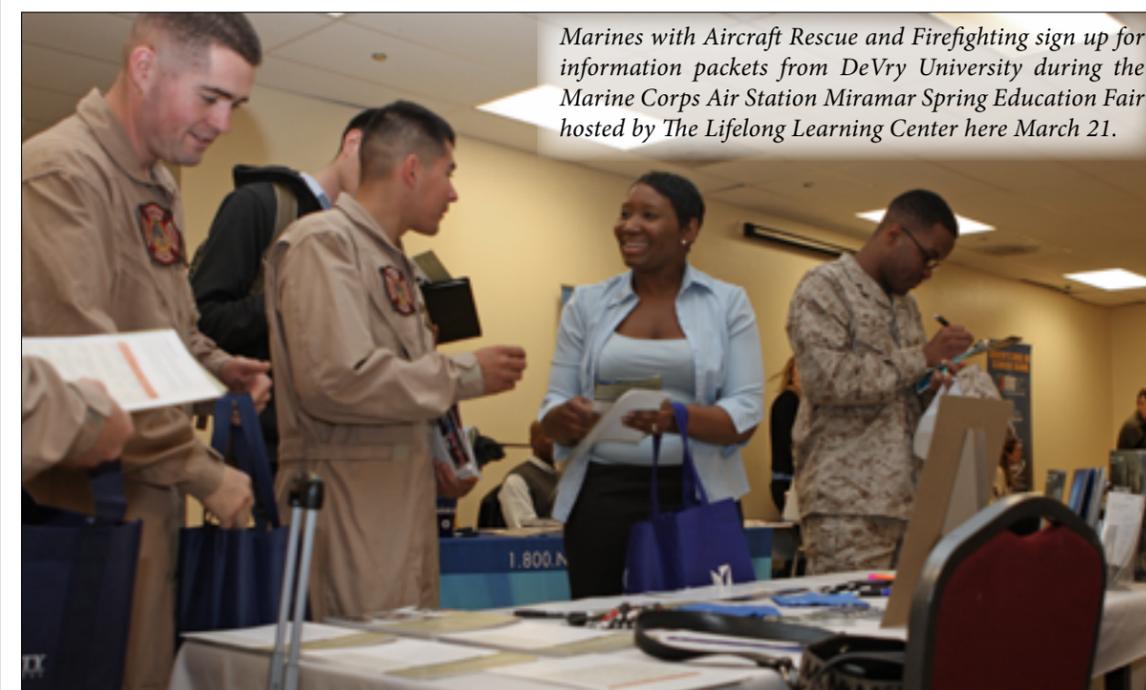
Upon his return from the deployment in July 2010, he transferred to MAG-16 and assumed duties as the operations officer and group WTI. During this period, he worked on several initiatives, including MV-22B Osprey transition, training area expansion, CH-53E/MV-22B external load procurement, WTI course planning and various current readiness issues. He also deployed as the exercise coordinator for two MAG-level integrated training exercises in Fort Hunter Liggett, Calif., and as the ACE operations officer for Enhanced Mojave Viper 6-11.

Cracknell’s decorations include the Air Medal with numeral 3, Navy and Marine Corps Commendation Medal, the Navy and Marine Corps Achievement Medal and the Combat Action Ribbon.

Pfc. Armando I. Danchez, a field wireman with Marine Wing Support Squadron 373 and a San Angelo, Texas, native, discusses course options with Izzy Avila, a Grand Canyon University military division representative, during the the Marine Corps Air Station Miramar Spring Education Fair hosted by The Lifelong Learning Center here March 21. With more than 50 education facilities represented, the education fair provided a central location for hundreds of service members to answer questions concerning tuition assistance, GI Bill use and degree options.



Marines gather around the Lifelong Learning Center information desk during the Marine Corps Air Station Miramar Spring Education Fair here March 21.



Marines with Aircraft Rescue and Firefighting sign up for information packets from DeVry University during the Marine Corps Air Station Miramar Spring Education Fair hosted by The Lifelong Learning Center here March 21.

Marines, sailors navigate education opportunities

Story and photos by Lance Cpl. Erica DiSalvo

More than 50 education facilities were represented during the Marine Corps Air Station Miramar Spring Education Fair hosted by The Lifelong Learning Center aboard MCAS Miramar, Calif., March 21.

Technical schools, colleges and universities offered enrollment and information packets for online and in-class options to service members during the four-hour exhibition.

This semiannual education fair provided a central location for Marines and sailors to learn of education opportunities they may not have known about such as information on schooling, tuition assistance, GI Bill use and degree options.

“The [fair] is great because I get to look at the general studies programs for different schools,” said Pfc. Jeremy G. Torres, a field wireman with Marine Wing Support Squadron 373 and a Glendale, Calif., native. “I don’t know exactly

what I want, but this is cool because I can check out online courses too.”

Prospective students were able to enroll on-site for courses and colleges in attendance. With as many as 400 service members visiting each education fair, the schools simplified much of the paperwork process for convenience.

“Everyone here is so easy to talk to,” said Cpl. Daniel Rios, a field wireman with MWSS-373 and a Dixon, Calif.,

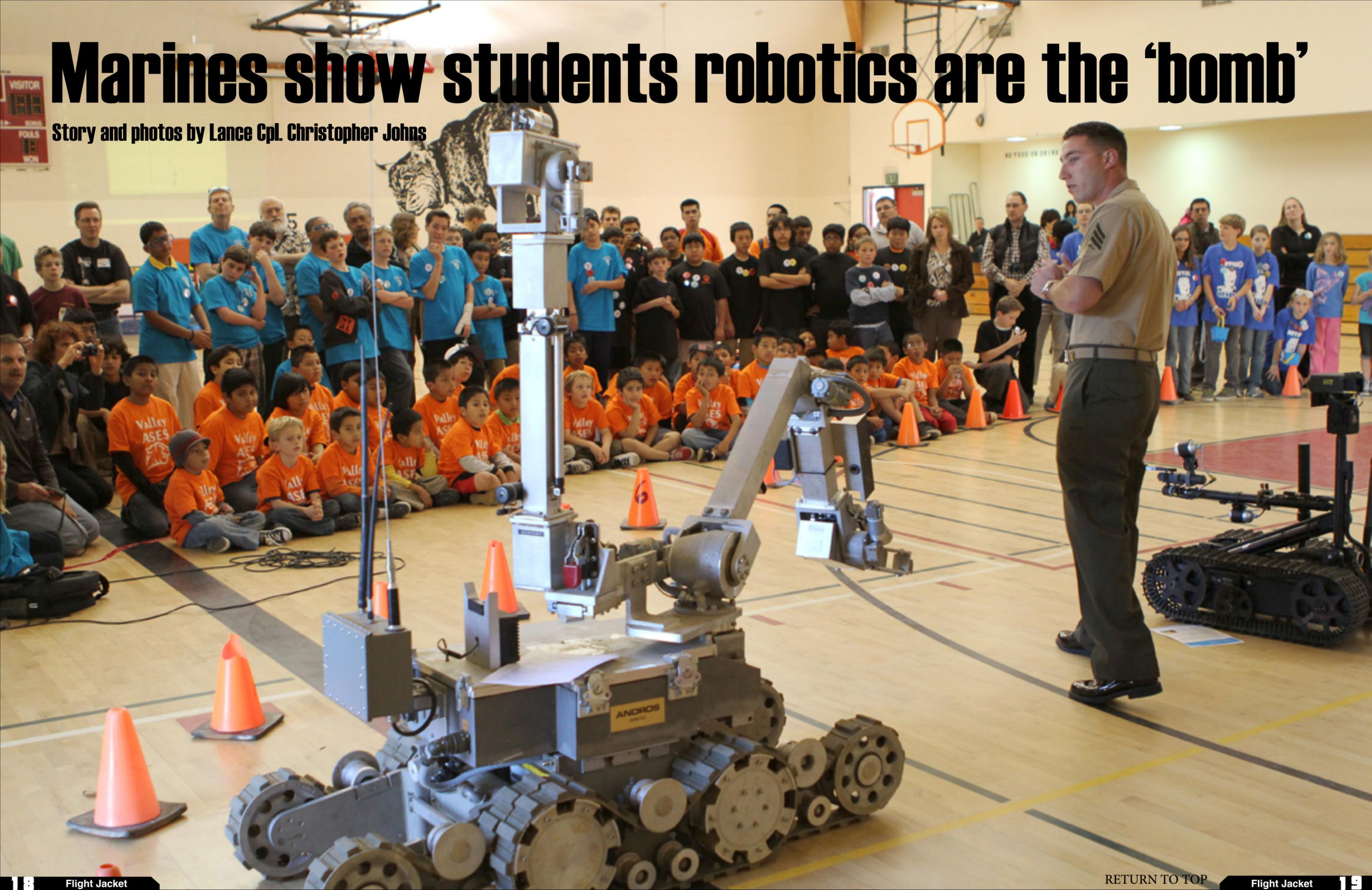
native. “[Information] is upfront, really easy to understand and [simple] to get started. I can get the information I need and even enroll if I see something I like.”

The MCAS Miramar Spring Education Fair helped Marines and sailors navigate the sometimes exhausting process of understanding the education opportunities that are available to them as active-duty personnel.

Click [HERE](#) for more photos

Marines show students robotics are the 'bomb'

Story and photos by Lance Cpl. Christopher Johns

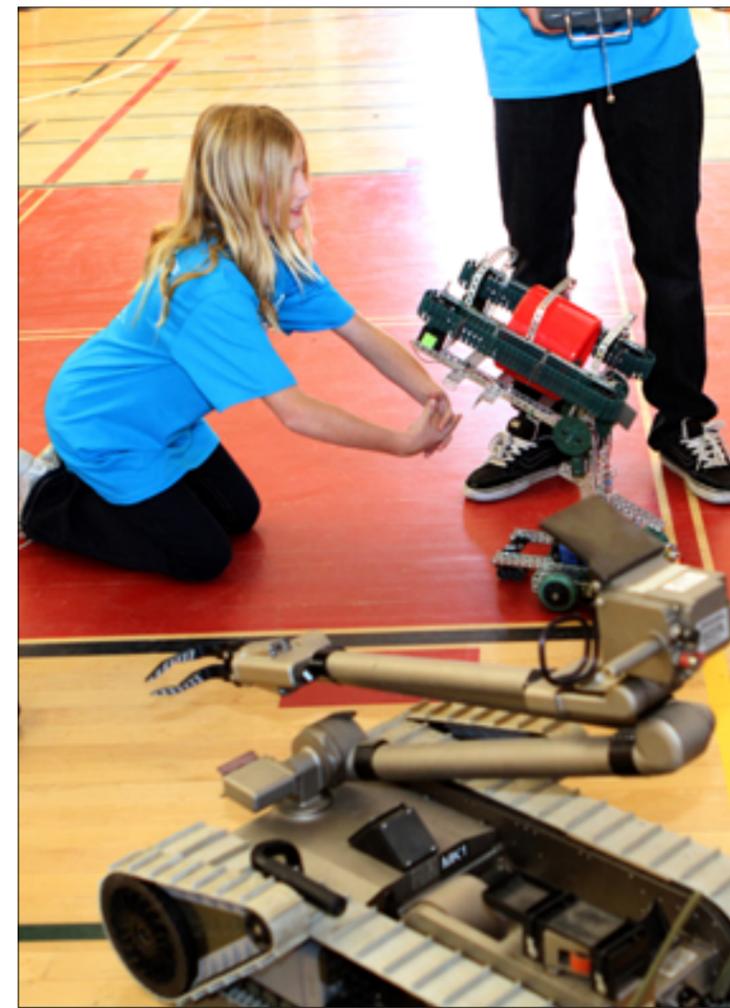




SAN DIEGO – Kindergarten students with Bernardo Heights Elementary School observe and explore the Mk 2 “Talon” during a robotics tournament at Bernardo Heights High School here March 20. Once they finished looking over the EOD robots, the students watched as robotics teams from all the schools in the district competed with student-built robots against one another.



SAN DIEGO – Sgt. Charles Huntley, an Explosive Ordnance Disposal technician with Headquarters and Headquarters Squadron and a Glendale, Ariz., native, explains how to make one of the robots move during a robotics tournament at Bernardo Heights High School here March 20. The Marines, based out of Marine Corps Air Station Miramar, Calif., came to the school to give a demonstration on equipment they use, showing students what their hard work could one day become.



SAN DIEGO – Students with Poway Unified School District play with robots they built as well as Marine Corps robots like the Mk 2 “Talon” during a robotics tournament at Bernardo Heights High School here March 20. The Marines came to the school to give a demonstration on equipment, showing students what their hard work could one day become.

SAN DIEGO – Explosive Ordnance Disposal Marines with Headquarters and Headquarters Squadron aboard Marine Corps Air Station Miramar, Calif., demonstrated to children from Poway Unified School District at Bernardo Heights High School in San Diego robotic technology used to safely dispose of dangerous explosives, March 20.

The Marines set up the demonstration to show children in the robotics program what their interests could possibly turn into later.

“We gave the students a small capability brief and some insights into the platforms we use,” said Capt. Erin Roush, the EOD officer in charge with H&HS and a Denver native. “We told them about how we use [the robots] for our job. [We] also gave them some motivation and ideas about what robotics can do to either further their careers or for application later on in life.”

The Marines presented each of the three robots to students rang-

ing from kindergarten to high schoolers taking part in the robotics program.

“The reason they do this is for science, technology, engineering and math,” said Roush. “They call it the S.T.E.M. Program, which doesn’t just advance [the students’] skills in those areas, but it allows for learning leadership as well, which is key.”

The Marines brought in the Mk 3 Mod. 0 Remote Ordnance Neutralization System, which is used for state-side missions. The Marines also showed the students the Mk 2 “Talon” and the PackBot Tactical Robot, all designed to assist EOD technicians with public safety endeavors to show the students what robotics benefits outside of hobbies.

“It gives [the students] a chance to see the end user, and see what can materialize out of those years of hard work that they put into something,” said Roush. “It might seem fun to them now, but it has a real-world application, especially in the world of public safety and the military.”

After the brief was completed, the students flooded around Marines and machines to see how the machines could move up-close. Once finished looking over the EOD robots, the students watched as robotics teams from all the schools in the district competed with their student-built robots against one another.

“The kids were pretty excited to see some of the equipment we use,” said Sgt. Charles Huntley, an EOD technician with H&HS and a Glendale, Ariz., native. “[The students] were definitely very excited to get their hands on them, and we were pretty happy to let them do that.”

After the event was over, the EOD Marines packed up the equipment for display to head home, having shown the students there is something they can do with the hobby they hold dear. Even if students of Poway Unified School District are only learning for fun now, with hard work, and dedication, they can make products that the Marine Corps could use to keep the public and America safe.



Bringing fitness back the Marine Corps way

Story and photos by Lance Cpl. Christopher Johns

Marines with the Single Marine Program from Marine Corps Air Station Miramar, Calif., visited De Portola Middle School, March 23, for a physical education fitness challenge.



SAN DIEGO – Students rush to the Marine from Marine Corps Air Station Miramar, Calif., waiting at the next station during a physical education fitness challenge with De Portola Middle School, March 23. The students took part in physical training exercises to include an agility course, tug-of-war, a team relay race and down-and-backs, guided by Marines from the air station's Single Marine Program.



SAN DIEGO – Sgt. Shane Counts, a network support division non-commissioned officer in charge with Marine Aviation Logistics Squadron 16 and a Lone Pine, Pa., native, speaks with students during lunch at De Portola Middle School, March 23.

The SMP holds six fitness challenges annually, each consisting of four separate events designed to be strenuous yet fun for both the Marines and students.

“[Opportunities like this] offer Marines the chance to impact and mentor the children,” said Johanna A. Jones, the SMP coordinator and a Hemet, Calif., native. “This shows the kids the importance of education and hard work for what you want to do.”

More than six hours, nearly 1,000 students and approximately 40 Marines took part in a tug-of-war competition, agility courses and individual calisthenics exercises and team relay races.

Marines also ate lunch in the school’s cafeteria while the children asked questions about the Marines’ jobs.

“Over all, [the Marines] were tired and a bit worn out afterward, but very happy to work with the kids,” said Pfc. Joyce Kaminski, a motor transportation mechanic with Marine Wing Communications Squadron 38 and a Longview, Wash., native. “It’s great that we have opportunities to go on trips like this. The SMP provides a large amount of chances to volunteer for events like this, or to go on trips to Big Bear or our [Las Vegas] trip.”

For more information on volunteer opportunities contact Johanna A. Jones, the SMP coordinator, at 858-577-6283.

Click [HERE](#) for more photos

SAN DIEGO – Lance Cpl. Nicholas Burkhardt, an intelligence analyst with Marine Heavy Helicopter Squadron 465 and a Hailey, Idaho native, races with a student during a physical education fitness challenge with De Portola Middle School, March 23. Approximately 40 Marines from Marine Corps Air Station Miramar, Calif., came to support the event, guiding nearly 1,000 students through the various exercises for the challenge.



SAN DIEGO – Marines from Marine Corps Air Station Miramar, Calif., and students push up in preparation for a bout of tug-of-war during a physical education fitness challenge with De Portola Middle School, March 23. The students took part in physical training exercises at four stations to include: an agility course, tug-of-war, a team relay race and down-and-backs, guided by Marines from the air station’s Single Marine Program.

Sergeants major, master gunnery sergeants, first sergeants and master sergeants from the 3rd Marine Aircraft Wing came together to discuss pertinent issues facing the Marine Corps during a Sergeants Major Symposium here March 21 and 22. These senior enlisted personnel listened to briefs from subject matter experts concerning new ways senior leadership can remain vigilant and proactive in the prevention of financial and criminal problems.



Sergeants major, master gunnery sergeants, first sergeants and master sergeants from the 3rd Marine Aircraft Wing came together to discuss pertinent issues facing the Marine Corps during a Sergeants Major Symposium here March 21 and 22.

Leadership gathers for problem prevention, issue discussions

Story and photos by Lance Cpl. Erica DiSalvo

Approximately 75 senior enlisted advisors from 3rd Marine Aircraft Wing gathered for a Sergeants Major Symposium aboard Marine Corps Air Station Miramar, Calif., March 21 and 22.

Sergeants major, master gunnery sergeants, first sergeants and master sergeants from the West Coast came together to discuss pertinent issues facing the Marine Corps including budget cuts, money appropriation and proactive drug prevention and detection.

While this symposium was the first wing-level sergeants major meeting, it is slated to become a semiannual event. These meetings will work in tandem with semiannual commander's conferences.

This forum allows senior enlisted personnel to come together and hash out issues junior Marines and the Marine Corps in general are currently facing, explained Sgt. Maj. Anthony A. Spadaro, the 3rd MAW sergeant major.

Day one of the two-day conference focused on group and squadron level briefs, while day two consisted of subject matter experts teaching new ways senior leadership can remain vigilant and proactive in the prevention of financial and criminal problems.

"My goal is to make the leadership see that the budget is shrinking, and what they can do within that [constraint]," said Col. Richard W. Pauly, the 3rd MAW comptroller, a military term meaning financial advisor. "We as a Marine Corps need to be able to do more with less, as well as know what we can and cannot do with spending."

Topics applicable to every rank and new interaction

techniques between these generations of Marines were also discussed.

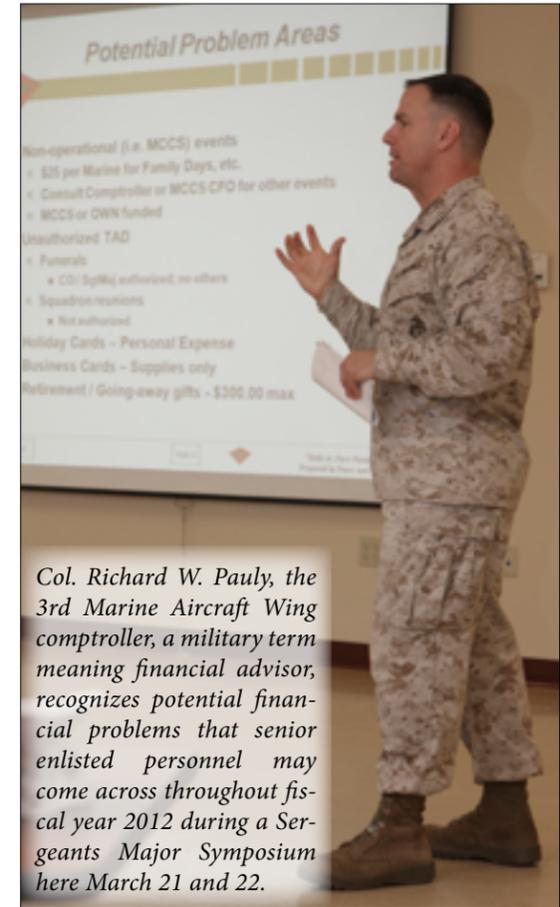
One example of this was drug detection and prevention. Experts from the Naval Criminal Investigative Service and the base Criminal Investigations Division gave briefs concerning the illegal use of substances. The briefs involved how to recognize behaviors that may be symptoms of several illegal and fatal drugs, which can cause severe brain damage, as well as what to do in the case of discovery.

"I think there is a generation gap between this forum, the people that lead and the people that are often affected by these problems," said Master Gunnery Sgt. Jeffery B. Wilson, the communications chief with Marine Wing Communications Squadron 38. "It is important to hear from people that can bridge that gap. By discussing this, we can update our policies and ways we communicate with those [privates first class] and lance corporals who we don't necessarily talk to everyday."

Mental health and the stigmas attached to it, legal procedures and practices and open forum question and answer periods where new topics and concerns individuals have confronted were also discussed over the two-day brief.

"It is a big air wing spread out all over southern California," said Sgt. Maj. James L. Johnson Jr., the Marine Unmanned Aerial Vehicle Squadron 3 sergeant major. "Any opportunity to discuss and get information or practices we can take back and apply across the wing is extremely important. That mentorship and leadership working together is just really good practice."

[Click HERE for more photos](#)



Col. Richard W. Pauly, the 3rd Marine Aircraft Wing comptroller, a military term meaning financial advisor, recognizes potential financial problems that senior enlisted personnel may come across throughout fiscal year 2012 during a Sergeants Major Symposium here March 21 and 22.

GUNFIGHTERS AID 1ST LAR INSERTION

STORY AND PHOTOS BY CPL. ISAAC LAMBERTH WITH
3RD MARINE AIRCRAFT WING FORWARD





CAMP BASTION, Afghanistan - An AH-1W Cobra helicopter with Marine Light Attack Helicopter Squadron 369 flies en route to support Marines from 1st Light Armored Reconnaissance Battalion in Helmand province, Afghanistan, March 15.



CAMP BASTION, Afghanistan - Sgt. Jason Sparks, a native of Savannah, Ga., and a door gunner for Marine Light Attack Helicopter Squadron 369, straps on his gunner's belt prior to taking off in a UH-1Y Huey helicopter at Camp Bastion, Afghanistan, March 15.



CAMP BASTION, Afghanistan - Cpl. Lucas Chambers (left) of Robbins, Tenn., a door gunner, and Sgt. David Garcia, of Glendale, Ariz., a crew chief, both from Marine Light Attack Helicopter Squadron 369, scan for suspicious activity while providing air support for Marines from 1st Light Armored Reconnaissance Battalion in Helmand province, Afghanistan, March 15.

CAMP BASTION, Afghanistan - An hour before the break of dawn, offices on the flight line of Camp Bastion, Afghanistan, were abuzz with the day's upcoming operations; one of which included providing close-air-support for Marines on the ground.

Prior to heading into a hostile area, two helicopters, a UH-1Y Huey and an AH-1W Cobra, from Marine Light Attack Helicopter Squadron 369, also known as the "Gunfighters," fired their door mounted machine guns. The final function check of their weapons reassured the crew they would be ready to engage enemy forces if necessary.

After finishing their final tests, the duo flew south and circled over a location suspected of containing IED-making materials as they waited for ground units to arrive and search the area.

As the sun's rays began to touch the desert of southern Helmand province, a platoon of Marines from 1st Light Armored Reconnaissance Battalion arrived in MV-22B Ospreys, from

Marine Medium Tiltrotor Squadron 365, to check the suspected location as the Gunfighters provided overwatch.

Arriving from the north, the Ospreys landed in a cloud of dust. Within seconds of touching down, the Marines of 1st LAR poured out of them. As quickly as the helicopters landed, they left, leaving the Marines on the ground to begin their search under the watchful eyes of the Gunfighters.

Capt. Josh McClellan, a pilot with HMLA-369 who participated in the day's events, said the mission was to support ground troops and stop the manufacturing of IEDs.

While the Marines of 1st LAR were on the ground, the two helicopters from HMLA-369 circled overhead, carefully scanning for any suspicious activity and ready to repulse any insurgent attack.

McClellan, of Mt. Juliet, Tenn., said providing air support is crucial to Marines in the event they are attacked.

"We are here to deter anybody from attacking the guys on the ground," he said. "If they do, we can nullify the threat."

Lance Cpl. Devin Yang, a scout with 2nd Platoon, Charlie Company, 1st LAR said having 3D MAW (FWD) helicopters nearby was a comforting sight.

"Seeing the Cobras [and Huey] made us all feel safer," said Yang of Tomah, Wis. "Since we are so far from friendly forces, the Cobra [and Huey] were a welcome support."

Sgt. David Garcia, a crew chief for HMLA-369, said the helicopters have large-caliber machine guns, rockets and missile systems which can greatly assist ground troops and save lives.

Garcia, of Glendale, Ariz., said the helicopters can deal serious firepower if needed. "If they [Marines] engage insurgents, we are here to help them out," he added.

McClellan said fortunately the mission did not require the Gunfighters to engage but if they are needed to in the future, they will be ready to assist ground troops in a moment's notice.

Miramar Marines Work Out with San Diego Students

Video by Sgt. W. Zach Griffith



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