

PROSPECTOR

MARINE CORPS LOGISTICS BASE BARSTOW



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SNCODCP

Barstow Marines take advantage of educational program

Warrior Preservation Award

Command representatives to nation's capitol to receive award

Marines return from Korea

Administrative Marines discuss deployment



Photo by Cpl. Thomas A. Bricker

First Sergeant Arthur Hernandez, Headquarters Battalion, Marine Corps Logistics Base Barstow first sergeant, leads Marines up a hill during the five-mile conditioning hike aboard MCLB Barstow and its outlying desert environment, March 14.

On The Cover:

Marines with Headquarters Battalion, Marine Corps Logistics Base Barstow hike up Radio Hill during a five-mile conditioning hike March 14, aboard the base and its surrounding areas. The five-mile hike is part of a series of hikes the Marines are participating in, building up to a longer hike at Big Bear Lake, Calif.

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Marine Corps Logistics Base Barstow, California
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On the web

Website:

<http://www.marines.mil/unit/mclbbarstow/pages/default.aspx>

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http://www.twitter.com/#!/MCLB_Barstow





Photo by Lance Cpl. Dominic A. Smarra

Col. Daniel P. Ermer, commanding officer of Marine Corps Logistics Base Barstow, makes the first donation of the year to the Navy/Marine Corps Relief Society campaign. Services provided by the NMCRS include interest-free loans and grants to deal with emergency needs, as well as education loans and grants.

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Going Green

Instead of heading to the recycling center or to the store, head to your local freecycle community, where members give items to other members or find cool new things - for free! To find a group near you, go to freecycle.org and enter your location. For more information about living a greener lifestyle, go online at <http://www.sierraclub.org>.

Energy Tip

Use a fan instead of an air conditioner this summer. A fan uses significantly less energy than a conventional air conditioner, plus, the website www.futurefriendly.com notes it produces no fluorocarbons and even requires less energy to manufacture. This is another Green Energy Tip from your MCLB energy team.

Today in U.S.M.C. history

March 22, 1952: Six new Marine battalions and Marine air groups were activated on the West Coast, giving the Corps the full authorized limit of three divisions and three wings.

Play Mornings!

Every other Friday, March 23, April 6 & 20, from 9 a.m. to 11 a.m. at the Desert View Housing Community Center. Children ages 6 weeks to 5 years old come and play. For more information, call MCFTB 577-6675 or 577-6408.

Lunch Time Special

Wednesdays & Thursdays from 11 a.m. to 1 p.m. at the Desert Lanes Bowling Center, Bldg. 342. Bowl as many games as you can for only \$4. For more information, call Desert Lanes 577-6264.

TGIF! TGFY!

Every Wednesday in April is TGIF! TGFY! Thank Goodness It's Friday – Thank Goodness For You! April is What's It All About? (April 11) To Explore Spirituality... (April 18) To Experience Grief and Loss... (April 25) To Obtain Self Acceptance... Classes will be held at the Desert View Housing Community Center from 1 p.m. to 2 p.m. For more information, please call Betty Murphy, LMFT, General Counseling, Marine and

Family Programs at 577-6533.

Married & Loving It

Tuesday, March 27 at 4:30 p.m. to 6:30 p.m. at the chapel. Class given by Betty Murphy and Manny Llaura. Child care is available for children already enrolled at the Child Development Center. For further information, contact Betty Murphy, LMFT at 577-6533.

Toddler Story Time

Tuesdays, April 3 & 17, at 9:30 a.m. to 10 a.m. at Library Services Bldg. 218. Children can have fun with engaging books, songs, and activities as they build their early literacy skills. For more information, contact the Library Services at 577-6395 or email LibraryBarstow@usmc-mccs.org.

Child Abuse & Neglect: What You Can Do

Tuesday April 3 at 1 p.m. at McTureous Hall Classroom. April is National Child Abuse & Awareness & Prevention month. Marine & Family Programs would like to invite you to a presentation

addressing the serious issue of child abuse. Instruction will focus on the signs & symptoms of child abuse and how to report suspected abuse. Information and resources are available for the base and civilian community at Marine & Family Programs Division, Bldg. 129. For more information, please call Michelle Lawing, Victim Advocate at 577-6533.

Family Game Night

Wednesday, March 28, at 4 p.m. at Library Services, Bldg. 218. Bring the whole family for a night of gaming. For more information, contact the Library Services at 577-6395 or email LibraryBarstow@usmc.mccs.org.

STAY IN THE LOOP!

Visit www.mccsbarstow.com or pick up a Quarterly Connection Magazine at any of your MCCS facilities.

March is Save Your Vision Month and Workplace Eye Wellness Month

Healthy Vision at the Computer

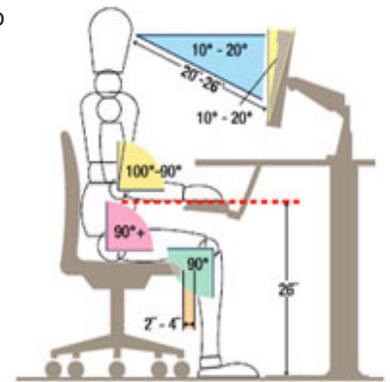
People who sit in front of a computer for long periods of time often encounter a variety of uncomfortable symptoms. Headaches, neck strain, backaches and wrist pain are common, but, sadly, the most prevalent symptoms of prolonged computer use—eye strain, blurred vision and dry eye—are often overlooked. In fact, eye and vision problems are the most frequently reported health care problems among computer users.

Computer Vision Syndrome

These symptoms contribute to computer vision syndrome, which the American Optometric Association defines as “the complex of eye and vision problems related to near work that are experienced during or related to computer use.”

Sitting at a computer generally causes a person to look straight ahead for long stretches, work in a dry office or home environment, and to blink less often. These factors can lead to vision problems. Additionally, computer use requires specific vision skills, which add further demands to the visual system and contribute to eye and vision discomfort. These skills include:

- **Ocular motility** — the ability of the eyes to move in various positions.
- **Accommodation** — the ability of the eyes to focus clearly at various distances.
- **Vergence** — The ability to move the eyes in (convergence) or out (divergence).



Effects of Working Environment

Computer work places various demands on the visual system. Each of these factors can play a part in computer vision syndrome.

- **Screen resolution** — Better resolution offers greater clarity and usually leads to improved comfort. Adjust the resolution to the highest resolution your monitor will support. If the increased screen resolution makes items too small, try increasing the font size (DPI) to compensate.
- **Screen contrast** — Adjust the contrast between the characters on the monitor and the background so the letters are easily read. Adjust the brightness of the monitor to an intensity that is comfortable to your eyes— not too bright and not too dim. Adjust both brightness and contrast for the best clarity.
- **Screen glare and reflections** — Minimize reflected glare on your monitor by using window treatments, dimmer switches on lights and glare reduction filters. Look for glare reduction filters that have received the American Optometric Association Seal of Acceptance. Proper adjustment should eliminate any reflected images from the monitor screen. To reduce glare, eliminate bright light sources from your peripheral vision and position your monitor perpendicular to windows or other bright light sources.
- **Image refresh rates and flicker** — A higher refresh rate for your monitor is best. The image on the screen should not flicker at all. (This is not a concern with LCDs.)
- **Working distances and angles** — It is important to work at a distance that is comfortable for you and where the image on the screen is clear. Having to move your head to an awkward angle to see the screen clearly suggests that your prescription may need adjustment.
- **General eyeglass prescription may not be adequate** — Computers are usually further and higher than a typical reading task. Glasses for most people wearing bifocals are not adjusted for this new distance or angle and therefore often are not adequate for using the computer.
- **Repetitive and stressful tasks** — Difficult tasks are challenging. Don't forget to take occasional breaks and let the eyes look far away while resting.

Reference: The American Optometric Association - <http://www.aoa.org/x5072.xml>

Marines take advantage of educational programs through SNCODCP

By Gunnery Sgt. Reina Barnett
Public Affairs Chief

Two Marines currently serving aboard Marine Corps Logistics Base Barstow have taken full advantage of the Staff Noncommissioned Officers Degree Completion Program, a program offered by the Marine Corps to select Staff NCOs, providing them an opportunity to obtain baccalaureate degrees which fulfill Marine Corps requirements while also satisfying personal educational goals.

Staff Sgt. Arturo D. Padilla, the Staff Noncommissioned Officer in charge of Marine and Family Services aboard the base, used the SNCODCP, to finish something he started before he joined the Corps. Padilla, who was 23 when he joined the Corps, had already been a student for three years at Northern Illinois University, studying sociology. Due to dwindling funds, like a lot of college students, Padilla turned his sights on joining the military.

“A friend of mine joined the Marine Corps, so I did too,” Padilla said.



Photo by Gunnery Sgt. Reina Barnett

Staff Sgt. Arturo Padilla, Marine and Family Services Staff Noncommissioned Officer in Charge at MCLB Barstow, gathers pertinent information from a Marine over the phone, inquiring about the Warrior Preservation Program, one of many services provided by the M&FS team.

Fourteen years later, with lots of hard work and late nights, Padilla has his Bachelor of Arts in Liberal Studies.

“I went to school at Mary Washington University in 2007 and 2008 in Fredricksburg, Maryland,” he said.

Marines who are accepted into the SNCODCP must maintain full-time student status while finishing their degree, and although that might not sound like a lot, especially considering the role of student becomes the Marine’s full-time job, it can be a juggling act, complete with myriad challenges.

The program requires a dedicated Marine who can balance family, work and school at the same time, Padilla noted.

Re-entering the classroom environment after 10 years did not come without its own

unique set of challenges, said Padilla.

“I didn’t have the same book-knowledge as the younger students, but I had more life experiences,” he said. Bringing those life-skills and being able to apply real-world knowledge and first-hand experiences did however, pay off.

Padilla, like any college student, faced obstacles, his were just different from most of his fellow classmates. “I had to balance my life,” he said, referring to his roles as father, husband, Marine and student.

“My grades in school weren’t necessarily based on what I knew or memorized, but how I organized, juggled, and applied the theories I learned to real-world scenarios,” he said, a trait he partly attributes to his experiences in the Corps.

Padilla said the SNCODCP, provides Marines an opportunity to reach their educational goals.

“My goals fell into place,” he said, referring to his selection process. The first time Padilla applied to the program, he was accepted. “If your goal is to get your [college] degree, and you’re confident enough

to return to your original MOS after being out of it for about five years, go for it.”

One of the stipulations of the program is a payback tour, which consists of three years, required by the Marine Corps at a designated duty station. The intent here is for the Marine to apply his earned degree in a B-billet. After the payback tour is complete, the Marine returns to his primary occupation in the Corps. The liberal arts degree with a focus on sociology that Padilla earned is definitely useful as Padilla helps implement and coordinate programs that Marine & Family Services offer

to active-duty servicemembers and their families. Putting his degree to use in his every day duties, is a plus, Padilla said.

Serving in a B-billet affords him this unique opportunity.

“[It] brings an active-duty perspective to billets and sections that normally do not have active-duty members,” he said. “It allows the services offered to be tailored even more so, to the military member and we can bring an even better perspective to everyone involved.”

GySgt. Dustin K. Hamilton also serves in a billet not normally occupied by a Marine at the base safety office. Originally an aviation ordnance technician, Hamilton spent the first half of his career putting bombs on F/A-18 jet fighters. That is, until he sought an opportunity at higher education.

“I was behind the power curve [with my education], and took it to the extreme,” Hamilton said. After facing some professional challenges, Hamilton prepared himself for civilian life and knew his best bet was to get as much schooling done as possible – to make himself competitive in the civilian workforce.

“I had always been big on doing my MCIs. . . I had 43 college credits from MCIs alone,” he said.

That proved to be a big motivator for him, and along with good leaders who supported him and provided sound guidance, Hamilton began his pursuit of earning his college degree. “I wanted to better myself, not just as a Marine, but beyond that. My mentors wouldn’t let me give up or drop my pack. . . they went above and beyond their duties to help me succeed.”

Although higher education wasn’t always on the top of his list, Hamilton was a fan of the free education the Marine Corps provided, always working on MCIs. . . to date, he has completed 144 of them. “It’s important to have a solid degree plan and you have to be able to complete your degree within 18 months of starting the program,” he said. Hamilton obtained his Bachelor of Science in aeronautics with dual minors in aviation and industrial safety from Embry-Riddle University.

“Getting your college degree,” he said, “not only makes you valuable to the Marine Corps, it makes you valuable outside the Corps and gives you something a normal MOS couldn’t.”

There are six fields of study the SNCODCP offers Marines, and their degrees must fall into one of those categories.

Once Hamilton was accepted into the program, it took him nine months to complete his degree.

“Both of my degrees in safety are helping me here. I have a wider knowledge base on how complicated machines work and how to make them safer.”

Hamilton offers this advice to young Marines: “Take advantage of the free education that the Corps provides. It will benefit you down the road.”

Pursuing your degree after having been in the workforce for awhile does come with its benefits. Hamilton said most college kids don’t get the opportunity to work for an organization as big as the Marine Corps with all the inherent responsibilities associated with being a Marine.

“This is my starting point,” he said, “college kids usually wait five to 10 years, to get to this point.”

Earning his degree has opened many doors for Hamilton.

It’s made me a better Marine. People look at me differently, they expect more of me, and I love that.”

More information on the SNCODCP can be found in MCO 1560.21D.

Marines aboard MCLB Barstow prepare for inspection headed by commanding general

By Cpl. Thomas A. Bricker
Combat Correspondent

Despite its differences from a “conventional” Marine Corps base, Marine Corps Logistics Base Barstow still adheres to strict policies and regulations and is inspected regularly for assurance.

In the near future, MCLB Barstow can expect to stand-by for inspection by higher. This is what is known as a commanding general’s inspection, in which the Marines’ basic fundamentals will be reviewed to ensure the unit’s combat readiness is up-to-par and is keeping within the standards of the Marine Corps.

The CGI assesses several areas within a Marine unit, ranging from individual uniform inspections, gauging a Marine’s appearance in a given uniform, to close-order drill and basic Marine Corps knowledge.

“When we’re inspected as a unit, we’re looked at for numerous things; we have uniform inspections in several different uniforms to make sure we still have that sharp and professional look the Marine Corps is known for. They also look at things like inventory of the unit’s gear to ensure their being accountable for everything so assets aren’t lost,” explained Master Sgt. Matt Blais, base operations chief at MCLB Barstow. “They look at us from head to toe. It’s almost like a very large-scale uniform inspection, where the inspectors look the unit over to make sure we are maintaining standards set by the Commandant of the Marine Corps,” he added.

MCLB Barstow isn’t the only base expected to stand an inspection by its commanding general, although it does have items specific to its own inspection that are not necessarily covered at other bases.

“All Marine Corps units go through a CGI every other year,” said Master Sgt. Frank Omarah, MCLB Barstow’s base inspector. “We have a few checklists [for the inspection] other units wouldn’t use like labor-employer relations, family housing and traffic management,” he added. This is because Barstow is inspected at a base-level, that includes civilians, and not a smaller unit consisting strictly of all Marines, he explained.

To prepare for the CGI, many Marines have to refamiliarize themselves with things they may not have had to do in some time,

such as wear certain uniforms or practice close-order drill. The inspectors make sure these aspects of the Marine Corps aren’t forgotten.

Marines learn close-order drill while in recruit training but may not get to practice much as a unit afterward. With the CGI, Marines are kept on their toes to ensure complacency doesn’t set in.

“Close-order drill is important for many reasons,” explained Master Sgt. Lorenzo Lacy, Chief of base supply. “It all falls back on the basic fundamentals of the matter.”

The basics of drill include positioning and movements of Marine units, instilling discipline in Marines standing in formation and confidence for noncommissioned and commissioned officers and an opportunity for Marines to handle weapons. The importance of drill is stressed through these fundamentals. Those who’ve instructed drill attest to this.

“I think it’s important the young NCOs practice drill. It helps them become comfortable with themselves and commanding junior Marines,” said Lacy, a former drill instructor. “Through practice, they continue to get better until they’re looking like the drill units that set us apart from other military services. It’s this precision and expertise that people know us by when it comes to close-order drill,” the Las Vegas,

Nev., native added.

The CGI lets units know what they excel at and what they need to work on and perhaps improve, to better the unit as a whole.

“If a unit is found to have discrepancies, they can often be corrected on the spot. Others may need to be worked on over the course of a certain amount of time,” Blais said.

In the past, MCLB Barstow has exceeded expectations set forth by its commanding generals.

“During [the 2010 CGI,] from Marine Corps Installations West, MCLB Barstow was awarded 39 certificates of commendation,” said Omarah. “Currently we have 87 checklists we’re required to maintain a high state of readiness for.”

Forty-five percent of checklists receiving noteworthy remarks is unheard of, Omarah explained.

Overall, many Marines find these inspections to be nerve-racking and time-consuming but necessary.

“I think they’re a great idea. Say, if I carried myself a certain way every day of the week incorrectly but I thought it was the right way, I’d like to have someone tell me what my faults are. I don’t want to be in the wrong,” said Blais. “There’s nothing wrong with an inspection. It’s what helps us better ourselves,” he concluded.



Photo courtesy of Marines.com 7

Tougher Marine Corps penalties, buckle up or don't drive

By Keith Hayes
Public Affairs Specialist

The punishment has increased for not wearing a seatbelt while driving aboard a Marine Corps installation under Marine Corps Traffic Safety Program Drivesafe Order 5100.19F.

The enhanced MCO signed by Commandant of the Marine Corps, General John F. Amos, Nov. 29, 2011, adds to the already existing burden of losing private automobile driving privileges aboard base for a period of time, said Brian Korves, safety officer, MCLB Barstow.

"The first violation (for driving without a license) is a 30-day suspension of all base driving privileges to include privately owned vehicles and government owned vehicles, so if you drive for work you can't drive for 30 days," Korves said, "plus attendance of an improved remedial driver improvement course."

For those drivers who still refuse to obey traffic laws by driving without a seatbelt, Korves said the penalties increase.

"The second offense is loss of driving privileges aboard base for six months," he said. "The third offense is one year without driving a POV or GOV on the

base."

That means an offending driver's employment could be severely affected.

"If you're a forklift operator you're out of a job," Korves said.

The harsher across the board policy is being implemented, Korves said, because many drivers still are not getting the message.

"The seatbelt laws have been in place since the '80s and you still have people refusing to wear their seatbelts, that's one of the reasons I believe they're making the punishment harsher," he said.

The stiffer penalties will inspire most drivers to not take a chance by driving without one.

"If they make this painful for a person then a person is more likely to comply with the laws," Korves said.

"Let's look at it this way," he continued. "You get caught not wearing your seatbelt you get 30 days not driving. You get in to an accident not wearing your seatbelt and you're dead. Which one is harsher?"

The bottom line is simple, Korves said.

"Seat belts save lives. I believe that this increased penalty for not wearing your seatbelt will make the base a safer place to drive," he said.



Photo by Curt Lambert

8 Al Watson, (left) a former Marine, donates a magnetized eagle, globe and anchor sign to Marine Corps Logistics Base Barstow, Mar. 15. Watson saw that the original sign was well-worn and decided to have it replaced on his own and donate it to the base.

MCLB earns third Warrior Preservation Award for safety

By Pfc. Victoria Fairchild
Combat Correspondent

Marine Corps Logistics Base Barstow has earned many base safety awards. Putting their best foot forward, the installation has once again secured the highest safety award for calendar year 2011.

This latest recognition has MCLB Barstow receiving its third Warrior Preservation Award.

“It’s an achievement not only for the safety office, but for the entire installation,” said Ray Aguilar, base safety manager aboard MCLB Barstow. “This was a competition between all Marine Corps installations and we won this through hard work and dedication to keeping everyone safe.”

The Warrior Preservation Award is presented each calendar year to the Marine Corps installation that has established the most comprehensive safety program and consists of a representative trophy, a commemorative wall plaque and a certificate signed by the Commandant of the Marine Corps.

The Warrior Preservation Award is one of four safety awards given each year, this one being the most sought-after.

“We gather all of our information toward the end of the year and submit our nomination packet,” said Beth Claro, an occupational health and safety specialist on base. “There is a lot of reviewing and double checking every office throughout the year to make sure everything is ready for the final inspections.”

Every year, offices are checked by Occupational Safety and Health Administration representatives for safety hazards including sharp objects needing a safety lock, misplaced cords, as well as gas and water lines.

If we find a problem within a shop, we either try to eliminate it immediately by getting rid of the object or having a citation written to have the problem resolved by getting a new piece of equipment to make sure it meets standards, said Claro.

After the safety checks are completed in every section and everything has passed, a nomination packet is made on behalf of MCLB Barstow and sent to Headquarters Marine Corps.

“[We won] the Warrior Preservation Award for MCLB Barstow in ’08, ’09 and last year,” said Aguilar. “We are also the

only installation that has the Occupational Safety and Health Administration’s Voluntary Protection Programs Star Status award.”

Aguilar will be attending the awards ceremony in Washington D.C. along with base commander Col. Daniel P. Ermer, and Sgt. Maj. Richard Charron, base sergeant major, March 28.

“Safety is our number one goal here,” said Aguilar, a Santa Ana, Calif., native. “There are over 42 programs and organizations that are checked and we make sure everything is done properly. It takes participation from everyone on base, not just the Marines. Civilian employees also contribute a lot of hard work to making this a success. That is why this award isn’t just for the office; it’s for everyone who makes an effort to stay safe.”

Other awards MCLB Barstow has received over the past several years include: the Department of the Navy Excellence in Safety Award, Commandant of the Marine Corps Safety Achievement in Safety Award, Headquarters Marine Corps Inspector General’s Award for Superior Performance, the Navy League’s General James L. Jones Safety Award, and Commandant of the Marine Corps Merit in Safety Award.



Ray Aguilar and Beth Claro admire Marine Corps Logistics Base Barstow's safety awards in the conference room of the safety office. MCLB Barstow will receive the Warrior Preservation Award March 28 in Washington D.C., making it the installation's 3rd Warrior Preservation Award in four years.

Two administrative Marines return from support operations in Korea

By Lance Cpl. Dominic A. Smarra
Combat Correspondent

Two Marines from Marine Corps Logistics Base Barstow recently returned from supporting exercise Key Resolve in Yongsan, Korea.

Key Resolve is an annual command post exercise held by United States Forces Korea, and conducted with the Republic of Korea Armed Forces. Military units throughout the U.S. deploy to Korea for the exercise, which consists of troops conducting maneuvers and engaging in gunnery exercises.

Corporals John Ordonez and Zackery Capell, both administrative clerks for the base, worked with ROK Marine forces, by providing transportation of important personnel to and from air stations and bases, as well as augmenting guard details.

“The job we were doing may seem boring, but we got to interact with a lot of very different people,” said Capell. “There are a lot of what-if scenarios that are thrown out there and we train on what to do. We were even able to meet the Commandant of the Marine Corps of the ROK Marine forces. It was motivating.”

The ROK Marine Corps was founded in 1949 and unlike most Marine units, which operate as part of their country’s Navy; the ROKMC operates as its own department under South Korean forces.

“It was an exciting experience to work with the Republic of Korea Marines,” said Capell. “At first it was very difficult to interact with them because they speak very little English. After a few days you start to learn different ways to communicate. This is also the first time that I have left the U.S. so you have a lot of different customs and courtesies that you need to pay attention to,” he explained.

Along with their daily duties, they were able to experience various places located in South Korea that had significance to not only the Marine Corps but also the United States.

“We were able to visit the Incheon landing zones as well as the Incheon Landing Operation Memorial Hall,” said Capell. “It was really interesting to be able to learn intricate details about Marine Corps history we wouldn’t necessarily learn anywhere else. Understanding the reasons why we were sent there and the number of people that were sent was exciting,” he explained.

The Incheon memorial hall is a museum which was built to commemorate the men who fought for South Korea on Sept. 15, 1950. The Incheon landing, also known as “Operation Chromite” was a plan formulated by

General MacArthur that he hoped would take the



Photo courtesy of Cpl. John Ordonez

North Koreans by surprise. The North Korean forces were unprepared for an assault from the Incheon landing position because they believed that there was no way for any form of amphibious assault could take place. The operation was extremely successful with only 20 men killed, 174 wounded, and one missing in action.

Cpl. Ordonez was also attached to a detail that visited the Korean Demilitarized Zone, which is a strip of land that runs across the Korean Peninsula, and serves as a buffer zone between North and South Korea. It is also the most heavily militarized border in the world.

“You hear about the DMZ but it is a very different thing to be there,” explained Ordonez. “You could really feel the tension there. It is a very strange thing to see, because the North and South Korean guards literally just stand there and stare at each other,” he said.

While carrying out their daily duties, the Marines spent time interacting with the ROK Marines and learning everything they could to help them after they returned to MCLB.

“They really look up to U.S. Marines,” the corporals said. “It is a mandatory enlistment for them over there, but they are all very interested about how they can become U.S. citizens and join the military here. It makes you feel good about what help that we are able to give to the ROKMC and understand how important the training and support that we give them is.”



Photo by Gunnery Sgt. Reina Barnett

Chaplain's Corner

The purpose of other people

By Lt. Benjamin Warner
Base Chaplain

A French writer once notoriously wrote that "Hell is other people." That line was delivered in a play where three people are forced to deal with the ugly truth of their character (or blatant lack thereof). I have met plenty of people who agree with this assertion. I have met others who wonder if it is indeed true. And, I have met some people who have caused me to contemplate what purpose they can serve in my life other than to make it difficult. Part of this is the nature of relationship—we all have competing needs and we tend to believe that our own needs cannot be met unless we deny someone else theirs. This is normally false, of course, but rarely do we let reason and rationality interrupt our own desires. All that being said, my intent is not to talk about what a problem other people can be to us, but rather to ask what purpose we can serve in each other's lives—specifically when it comes to spiritual growth.

What got me thinking about this was a conversation with a Marine last week. We were talking about the Chaplains whom he has served with, and how some of them did not make much of an effort to visit with their Marines while they were in dangerous

areas. This Marine I was speaking with tells his guys (and I'm paraphrasing here), "I don't care what you believe in... when we're out there under fire you look at the guy to your right and to your left... that's what you believe in now." I think this shows tremendous insight into what God desires for us to understand about relationship. Think of the most common metaphor the New Testament uses for God's people: the body of Christ. What does it mean to be someone's body other than to take action on behalf of that person?

Think about it this way—Christians (amongst whom I count myself) believe that Jesus is risen from the dead, and therefore alive. Yet, we also realize that Jesus is neither currently visible nor (physically) present with us on earth. There is much to be said for spiritual presence, but we'll leave that for another time. This physical absence has its own limitations. This is why the "body of Christ" is necessary. We need other people in order to experience all that God has designed for us. Without the context of relationship, we cannot live out eighty percent of what Jesus actually taught. Consider this: of the Ten Commandments, six of them (a majority) give instruction on how to interact with other people while only four tell us how to relate to God! Other people offer us challenges, they offer

us comfort, they offer us companionship, and many other things that we consider both positive and negative in life. All of that has a purpose—to be part of God's plan in shaping who we are becoming. To rephrase it—other people embody God's presence for us.

My question for you is what permission or role do you give other people in your life? Are other people something that gets in the way of you doing what you want? Are other people an asset, or do you consider them more of a burden? How you decide to interact with other people will impact who you are developing into as a person (even if you consider yourself an atheist). You can see each interaction as an opportunity to reshape old habits that may not be working for you. Or, you can see other people bring joy into your life, just for the sake of joy. Whatever the outcome, people offer us something that we lack for ourselves, and we need to treasure that.



Photo by Pfc. Victoria Fairchild

Civilians and Marines participate in the 2011 Green Eggs and Ham Single Marines Program fund raiser at the base family restaurant. Each breakfast meal had at least one green item, including green eggs, hash browns and biscuits and gravy. The event was held on March 16, all proceeds going to the SMP to help fund future trips.

