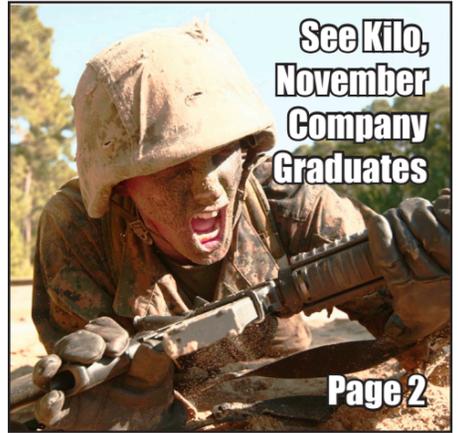


THE PARRIS ISLAND BOOT



See Kilo,
November
Company
Graduates

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Kilo Company faces obstacles



one last time
before Crucible

Page 5

Photo by Lance Cpl. Javarre Glanton

Recruits from Kilo Company, 3rd Recruit Training Battalion, climb up the Confidence Course's "Stairway to Heaven" during their second encounter with the course April 27 at Leatherneck Square.



Photo by Lance Cpl. Javarre Glanton

Pfc. Gracia Kayinanura from Platoon 4012, November Company, 4th Recruit Training Battalion, and Pvt. Brianna Morris, from Platoon 4013, wait for their pugil-sticks fight during the Crucible on May 3.

November takes fight to Octagon

Lance Cpl. Javarre Glanton
Staff Writer

The recruits of November Company, 4th Recruit Training Battalion, suited up in padding and ran into the Octagon ready to fight at Page Field on May 4.

The recruits applied some of the Marine Corps Martial Arts Program techniques they learned in previous training, from upper-body strikes to bayonet techniques.

The recruits came to the bouts knowing what to expect, said Sgt. Mitchell Moore, a martial arts instructor-trainer at Leatherneck Square.

"You teach someone this who's probably never fought before, and they come here and walk away with confidence," said Moore, 27, of Marion, N.C.

The recruits rushed in to the ring with protective gear on and stopped in front of their opponent - a fellow recruit. With a MCMAP instructor acting as referee standing between the two, the recruits shouted their body weight and began swinging on the words of the proctor.

While in the ring, the recruits engaged in body boxing, which is boxing without face or groin strikes. Afterward, they take on one of their fellow recruits in their fourth pugil sticks match. They use padded sticks and attempt to land a winning blow on their opponents, simulating fighting with a bayonet-fixed rifle.

The purpose of the practical setting

SEE OCTAGON PAGE 3

Kilo Company sends rounds down range



Photo by Lance Cpl. F.J. Abundes

Rct. A.J. Black, a recruit with Platoon 3034, Kilo Company, 3rd Recruit Training Battalion, shoots in the standing position April 4.

Lance Cpl. F.J. Abundes
Staff Writer

Recruits of Kilo Company, 3rd Recruit Training Battalion, kept their Eagle, Globe and Anchor's in their sights April 6 during their rifle qualifications.

With 50 issued rounds, the recruits tested their marksmanship at 200, 300 and 500 yards.

"If you can't shoot a weapon, all you are going to do is get yourself or somebody else killed, or both," said Sgt. Eliazar Hernandez, a primary marksmanship instructor with Weapons and Field Training

Battalion.

Recruits shoot slow fire in sitting, kneeling and standing positions at the 200-yard line. They execute a rapid fire in the sitting, as well. At the 300-yard line, recruits shoot slow fire from the sitting position and shoot the rapid fire while lying down. The final shots are fired from the 500-yard line.

Recruits learn how to align their sights, how to make adjustments to their sights, how to control the weapon and how to shoot at a low and at a rapid rate from

SEE RANGE PAGE 6

NEWS BRIEF

Run for the Tea

The MCAS Beaufort Officers' Club is proud to host its 2nd Annual "Run for the Tea" five-kilometer and Kids' Races on May 19. For more information or to request a registration form, please call 843-522-0522 or email os-crunforthetea@gmail.com.

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Dog handler's work in Afghanistan

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Canadian forces learn about Marine infantry tactics

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Marine describes progress in Helmand province

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KILO & NOVEMBER COMPANY GRADUATES

Kilo Company Honor Graduates

Pfc. T. C. McCarthy, Mount Pleasant, S.C.
Platoon 3032, McCarthy was recruited by
Sgt. Pardee and trained by Staff Sgt. Berry

Pfc. J. M. Gagen, Hamersville, Ohio
Platoon 3033, Gagen was recruited by
Sgt. Beightol and trained by Staff Sgt. Roess

Pfc. S. A. Selman, Burlington, Vt.
Platoon 3034, Selman was recruited by
Sgt. Haynes and trained by Gunnery Sgt. Barlow

Pfc. E. M. Sanderson, Oxford, Mich.
Platoon 3036, Sanderson was recruited by
Gunnery Sgt. Cason and trained by Sgt. Butler

Pfc. L. S. Mains, Rayland, Ohio
Platoon 3037, Mains was recruited by
Sgt. Compton and trained by Staff Sgt. Hogue

November Company Honor Graduates

Pfc. G. F. Kayinamura, Jacksonville, Fla.
Platoon 4012, Kayinamura was recruited by
Staff Sgt. Silvestro and trained by Staff Sgt. Zalwango

Pfc. E. J. Kelso, Leaburg, Ore.
Platoon 4013, Kelso was recruited by
Gunnery Sgt. Arao and trained by Sgt. Achterberg

Platoon 3032 Pfc. G. M. Abele, Pfc. M. Amedu, Pvt. M. W. Anderson, Pfc. C. R. Bailey, Pvt. A. L. Bentick, Pfc. M. S. Billesbach, Pvt. M. M. Bradley, Pfc. F. Burgos, Pvt. S. D. Burton, Pvt. N. Camargo Jr., Pvt. J. R. Crittenden Jr., Pvt. J. B. Delos-Santos, Pvt. A. W. Dover II, Pvt. R. C. Fredia III, Pvt. D. M. Gefellers, Pvt. G. J. Guanilo-Cueva, Pfc. B. P. Hackney, Pfc. D. A. Harris Jr., Pfc. E. J. Hodge, Pfc. P. J. Hudgins, Pfc. V. J. Hudson, Pfc. A. P. Hunt, Pvt. E. A. Hussey, Pvt. T. N. Johnson, Pvt. C. J. Lester, Pfc. S. W. Lyall, Pvt. P. R. MacGregor, Pfc. T. C. McCarthy, Pfc. R. J. McClure, Pvt. R. M. Montgomery, Pfc. J. L. Morrow, Pvt. C. J. Ochs, Pvt. F. Orta Jr., Pfc. J. Paul, Pvt. F. T. Payne, Pvt. S. E. Perez, Pvt. B. L. Pittman Jr., Pfc. B. M. Ramirez, Pfc. J. T. Rehme, Pvt. M. B. Smith, Pfc. R. J. Smith, Pfc. J. R. Thomas, Pfc. S. O. Thomas, Pvt. A. J. Thompson-Powell, Pvt. Z. M. Urquhart, Pvt. D. M. Usry, Pvt. R. L. Vanover, Pvt. J. H. Weideman-Beal, Pfc. J. E. Wilson, Pvt. K. A. Wofford, Pfc. W. J. Wolter Jr., Pvt. D. R. Workman

Platoon 3033 Pvt. M. T. Amnott, Pvt. C. E. Bennett, Pvt. R. B. Berg, Pvt. K. S. Berry, Pvt. D. H. Bock, Pvt. T. S. Bower, Pvt. J. P. Britt, Pvt. J. B. Burt, Pvt. R. F. Cartwright, Pfc. D. Casillas, Pvt. K. J. Chaisson, Pvt. C. A. Clark, Pvt. D. P. Coe, Pvt. K. R. Cowing, Pfc. L. E. Curtis, Pfc. D. O. Dahlquist, Pvt. R. A. D'Alesandro, Pvt. R. J. Deline, Pvt. D. E. Dominytus, Pvt. M. J. Dumont Jr., Pvt. C. W. Engle, Pvt. E. M. Everetts, Pvt. F. Fortune, Pvt. B. L. French, Pfc. C. L. Frye Jr., Pfc. J. M. Gagen, Pvt. D. K. Gilbert, Pvt. W. A. Gillam Jr., Pfc. D. B. Gravanis, Pvt. C. J. Gravley, Pvt. K. K. Greene, Pfc. A. W. Hudson, Pvt. R. Jimenez-Lora, Pfc. C. Medina, Pvt. J. R. Melendez, Pvt. D. M. Merrifield, Pfc. J. D. Miller, Pfc. K. A. Miller, Pfc. T. D. Muise, Pfc. J. R. Norman, Pfc. V. E. Nunez, Pfc. K. E. Pappas, Pfc. A. Pardue II, Pvt. D. R. Parker, Pfc. R. W. Peck, Pfc. P. Philip, Pvt. J. V. Powell, Pfc. R. Santiago, Pfc. M. G. Sauer, Pfc. N. C. Taylor, Pvt. D.M. Vo, Pfc. D. J. Walsh, Pfc. Z. T. Wedemire, Pvt. R. J. Zagra

Platoon 3034 Pvt. A. E. Almonte, Pfc. K. C. Amato, Pvt. J. D. Becerra, Pvt. D. V. Biondolillo, Pvt. A. J. Black, Pvt. R. S. Burg Jr., Pvt. J. M. Cabrera, Pvt. M. A. Carbonaro, Pvt. W. J. Casey IV, Pvt. H. P. Cohen, Pvt. E. R. Cooley, Pvt. J. A. Corcino, Pvt. S. A. Crowe, Pvt. T. W. Curry, Pfc. B. W. Delancey, Pvt. K. P. Demetron, Pfc. D. P. Desroche, Pfc. J. E. Eason, Pfc. J. J. Feeney, Pvt. M. P. Fico, Pvt. A. Garcia-Sanchez, Pfc. N. R. Haberer, Pfc. C. L. Houston, Pvt. L. R. Jones, Pvt. J. M. Jordan, Pfc. J. S. Koehler, Pfc. P. P. Laman IV, Pfc. W. O. Latino, Pvt. W. T. Lear IV, Pfc. C. A. Lyttle, Pvt. A. R. Maccini, Pvt. A. E. Manzella, Pvt. R. A. Martinez, Pvt. T. A. Marzka, Pfc. D. T. Mossberg, Pvt. M. A. Newton, Pfc. B. H. Noworyta, Pvt. W. E. Parfait, Pfc. S. M. Reese, Pvt. K. E. Richards, Pfc. D. C. Rogers IV, Pvt. J. T. Sellers, Pfc. S. A. Selman, Pvt. J. T. Short, Pvt. J. D. Sikes, Pfc. J. D. Smith, Pvt. J. A. Stasio, Pvt. B. E. Taddei, Pvt. C. A. Thayer, Pvt. J. D. Thayer, Pfc. G. E. Thomas III, Pvt. M. J. Thompson, Pvt. M. C. Vogel, Pfc. C. R. Weaver, Pfc. T. V. Weber, Pvt. A. J. Wood

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More of the story

OCTAGON

CONTINUED FROM PAGE 1

is to ensure the recruits completely grasp the concepts of self-defense and close combat, said Moore.

“We should always have our weapon with us, and we should know how to use it in close combat if need be,” he said. “If a Marine runs out of ammo or is unable to fire their weapon for any reason

while in combat, they’ll know how to use their rifle to defend against the enemy.”

“I just focused on being aggressive, confident and relaxed,” said Rct. Carol Gonzalez, with Platoon 4013. “I kept in mind what I was taught, and I held my bearing when I got hit so I wouldn’t lose focus and lose the match.”

Martial arts is focused around improving discipline: physical and mental, Moore said.

“MCMAP is much more than just knowing how to do the techniques,” he said. “We try to instill the correct combat mindset into recruits before they leave recruit training so they’ll know what to do and how to do it.”

Recruits earn the tan belt while in recruit training as a building



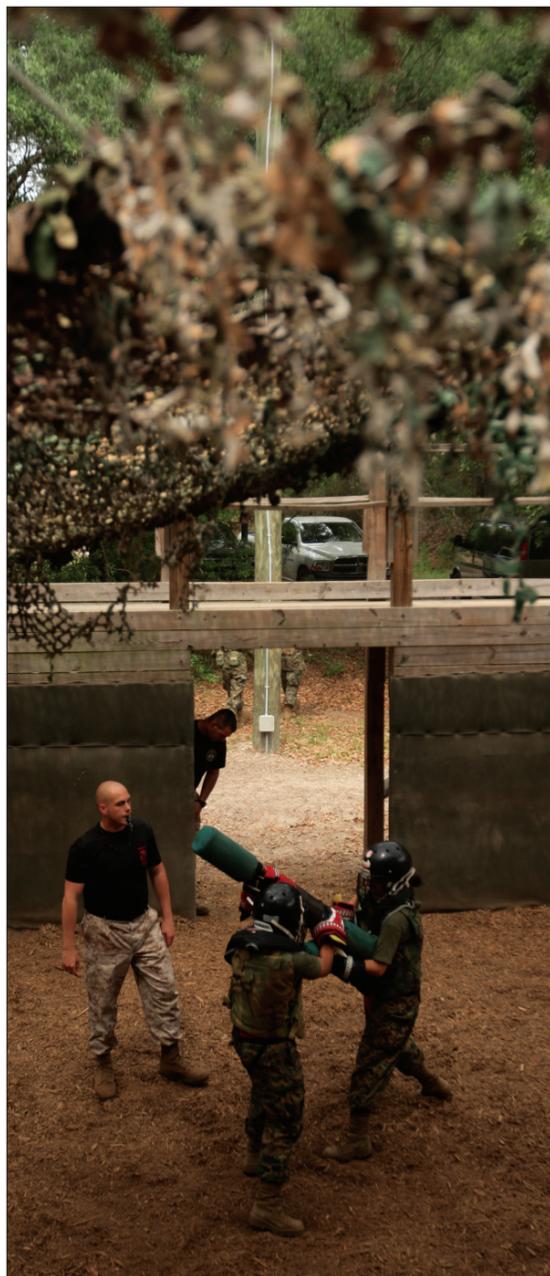
Photos by Lance Cpl. Javarre Glanton

Pfc. Elizabeth Kelso, Platoon 4013, November Company, 4th Recruit Training Battalion, and Pfc. Erika Meister, Platoon 4012, face off in a pugil sticks match May 3.

block for the higher levels they will be able to work for during their Marine Corps careers.

“I feel confident in my training and ready for the battlefield. I know I can fall back on what I

learned here in combat,” said Gonzalez, 23, of Keene, Texas.



Pvt. Carol Gonzalez and Pvt. Katherine Thomas, Platoon 4013, face off in pugil sticks during the Crucible. This is the fourth round of pugil sticks that November Company participated in during recruit training.



Pfc. Selena Locklear, Platoon 4012, November Company, 4th Recruit Training Battalion, squares off against Pvt. Kimberly Poore, Platoon 4013, May 3 during the Crucible.

MARINE'S BEST FRIEND: LIFE OF A DOG HANDLER IN AFGHANISTAN

Cpl. Timothy Lenzo
1st Marine Division

TREK NAWA, Afghanistan – Many children beg their parents for a dog. The floppy ears and wagging tail seem to attract children to man's best friend. But many parents know that caring for a dog means a lot of responsibility, training and effort.

Dog handlers in the Marine Corps not only shoulder those same responsibilities — they volunteer for it. Then take on the responsibilities of being deployed to Afghanistan as well.

A dog handler's job can be exhausting, with an additional month of dog handler school, combined

with months of predeployment training.

For Cpl. Jeffery Rodriguez, a dog handler with Weapons Company, 2nd Battalion, 6th Marine Regiment, those responsibilities are more like a privilege.

Rodriguez said he loves being a dog handler. He knows he's helping his squad, and the added responsibilities far outweigh the added attention of caring for a dog.

What sets Rodriguez apart from other dog handlers is the personal effort he puts into Dharma, a 4-year-old Labrador retriever.

"He's the best dog handler I've ever seen," said Sgt. Edward Welsh, Ro-

driguez's squad leader. "He's constantly taking care of the dog and working to make himself and Dharma better."

Rodriguez, a native of Fayetteville, Ga., knows that a dog handler's job is more than just patrolling with and feeding the dog. The most important job is ensuring the dog is well-prepared for the deployment ahead.

Shortly after he arrived in Afghanistan, he built Dharma a new kennel.

The kennel, made from discarded pieces of Hesco wall, has a door and a crate for Dharma to sleep in. He used excess cargo netting to cover half of the kennel to shield Dharma from the harsh wind and heat of Afghanistan.

Dharma, with her endless wagging tail and dark eyes, returns the favor with loyalty and obedience.

Rodriguez's responsibilities extend further than supplying Dharma with shelter. He works with Dharma to keep her skills sharp.

"He exercises the dog, and whenever he goes running, he takes the dog with him," said Welsh, a native of Cleveland.

Keeping the dogs in shape is vital in an area where temperatures reach more than 100 degrees Fahrenheit.

"If a dog gets out of breath in 20 to 30 minutes, they actually become a hindrance to the unit," said 1st Lt. Joseph Hoeksema, Rodriguez's platoon commander. "Dharma is in shape, and (Rodriguez) works her out two to three times a day."

Keeping Dharma in shape is a priority for Ro-

driguez. He laughingly said he can't let the dog get fat.

Rodriguez continually trains Dharma. After patrols and after security posts, he trains her with commands to strengthen their communication.

The bond between a handler and his dog is based on trust. If a dog doesn't trust the handler it won't obey commands.

"He tells her to sit there and stay there, [and] she does it," said Hoeksema, a native of Davenport, Iowa. "It doesn't matter if we are getting shot at, she's obeying (Rodriguez)."

Rodriguez has Dharma to help find roadside bombs and weapons caches.

"I use Dharma to search compounds, or to verify potentially dangerous objects," said Rodriguez. "She's like my little guardian angel running around."

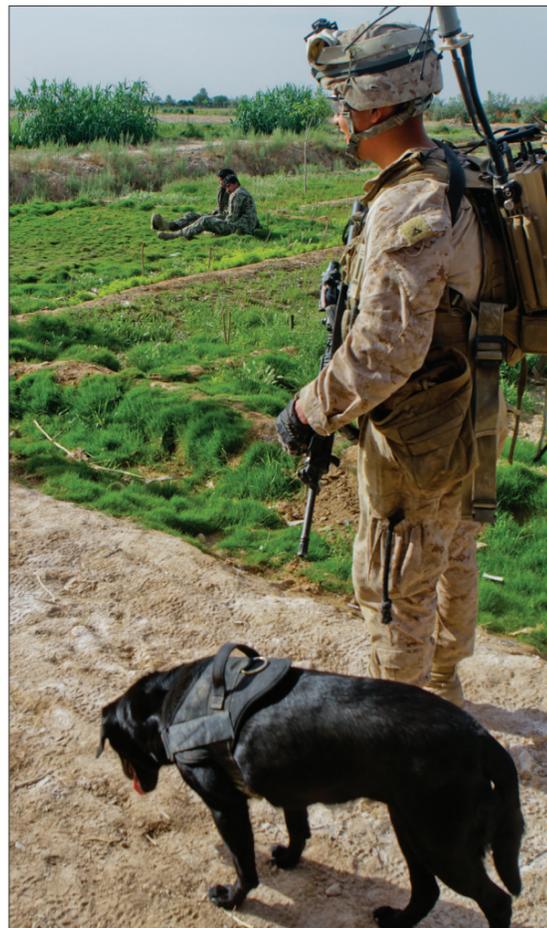
The Marines patrol with Dharma daily, clearing compounds and routes.

"Just trusting (Dharma) helps the Marines," said Hoeksema. "When she goes into a compound and doesn't find an improvised explosive device, the Marines are able to walk in confident that there aren't any IEDs."

Dharma confirmed two IEDs and some hidden-away weapons while deployed. She's also made an impact on the Marines she protects.

Dharma helps with morale of Marines who are away from their families for several months.

After patrolling, the Marines regularly pet and play with Dharma. They also laugh as she interacts



Photos by Cpl. Timothy Lenzo

Lance Cpl. Jeffery Rodriguez, a dog handler with Weapons Company, 2nd Battalion, 6th Marine Regiment, patrols with Dharma, a 4-year-old black Labrador retriever April 25. Dharma has found two confirmed roadside bombs during this deployment.

with the local animals — goats and turkeys make an interesting find for a curious dog.

The sound of wings flapping and a loud gobble lets the squad know Dharma is up to some good-natured mischief.

Rodriguez lets it go for a little bit before calling Dharma back.

"It has been a great experience being a dog handler," said Rodriguez. "It's a

great job to have with a lot of responsibility."

The extra workouts and countless hours to keep Dharma's training sharp are well worth the sacrifice when compared to the bond Rodriguez developed with Dharma. He considers her more than a dog. She is a friend, and a faithful one at that.

"She's not much of a growler," said Rodriguez. "She does get protective with me though. She'll bark at someone if she thinks I'm in danger."

In a couple of weeks, Rodriguez and Dharma will return home from their deployment to Afghanistan. This is Dharma's first deployment and could be Rodriguez's last.

They'll return on the same flight, but will then be separated. Dharma will be assigned a new dog handler, and Rodriguez will return to his squad.

Though he said the goodbye will be hard, Rodriguez shared that he loved every minute of being a dog handler. The bond he built with Dharma and the experience was well worth the extra responsibility.

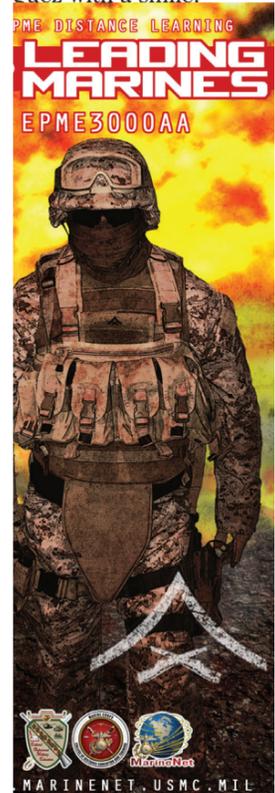
"It's hard not to think of Dharma and not think of Dharma too," said Welsh. "They are like two peas in a pod."

Rodriguez leaves Afghanistan with a four-legged friend and a lifelong bond.

"These dogs do work, so I'd want the next dog handlers to know to take it seriously," said Rodriguez with a smile.



Lance Cpl. Jeffery Rodriguez, a dog handler with Weapons Company, 2nd Battalion, 6th Marine Regiment, stands with his dog, Dharma, next to the kennel he built for her April 26. The kennel, made from extra Hesco wall and cargo netting, provides Dharma relief from the harsh Afghanistan wind and heat.



Kilo returns to the Confidence Course



Photos by Lance Cpl. Javarre Glanton

Recruits from Kilo Company, 3rd Recruit Training Battalion, use teamwork to make their way to the top of the Confidence Course's "Skyscraper" April 27 at Leatherneck Square.

Lance Cpl. Javarre Glanton
Staff Writer

Recruits from Kilo Company, 3rd Recruit Training Battalion, took on the Confidence Course for the second time at Leatherneck Square April 27.

The recruits, then in their final month of training, already knew what to expect on the course when

they set out to climb, jump and run on that sunny morning.

"It was a lot easier than when we first did this course," said Pvt. Alexander Almonte, with Platoon 3034. "I got through everything much faster and easier than before because of all the training we've done since the first time we ran the course."

The recruits needed

mental fortitude, physical strength and stamina, and trust in one another to overcome the obstacles, said Staff Sgt. Chris Hogue, chief drill instructor of Kilo Company.

"It really helps build their confidence to see how much easier they can get through the obstacles," said Hogue. "It also stresses teamwork and builds camaraderie between the recruits."



Staff Sgt. Andrew Rudd, a drill instructor with Platoon 3033, Kilo Company, 3rd Recruit Training Battalion, motivates Rct. Alexander Maccini, also with Platoon 3033, to climb the Confidence Course's "Wall Climb" April 27 at Leatherneck Square.



▲ Rct. Engel Blanco, with Platoon 3037, Kilo Company, 3rd Recruit Training Battalion, walks down the "Balancing Logs" during the Confidence Course April 27 at Leatherneck Square.



Rct. Hector Lopez, with Platoon 3037, Kilo Company, 3rd Recruit Training Battalion, moves across the "Weaver" during the Confidence Course April 27 at Leatherneck Square.

▶ Sgt. Jonathan Herrera, a drill instructor with Platoon 3032, Kilo company, 3rd Recruit Training Battalion, observes a his recruits on the "Rope Bridge" of the Confidence Course April 27 at Leatherneck Square.



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Marines exchange infantry skills with Canadian forces

Cpl. Lucas Vega

Marine Forces Reserve

MEAFORD, Ontario - For the first time since 2001, a New York state-based Marine Corps Reserve infantry company trained with The Royal Hamilton Light Infantry, Canadian forces here, April 20-22, during a small-scale, bilateral, 48-hour exercise.

Following the 9/11 attacks, heightened security at the U.S. and Canadian border made border-crossing procedures more tedious and difficult and bilateral training with Canadian forces was put on hold. The past decade's operational tempo and deployments to Iraq and Afghanistan also contributed to taking train-

ing with Canadians.

Training with border nations like Canada is an integral part of Marine Forces North's responsibility for homeland defense reserve unit was the ideal force to conduct this bilateral training due to the unit's close proximity to the Canadian border.

At company's reserve center in Buffalo, N.Y., only a river serves as the border between the United States and Canadian land. About 200 miles north is a remote training facility in Ontario, off the coast of Lake Huron, operated by the Canadian forces.

During a weekend drill, I Company paid a visit to their neighbors to the north to train at the Meaford Land Force

Area Central Training Center to exchange infantry skills.

"This training was more than everything we expected with these guys," said Maj. William Marlowe, inspector-instructor, for the company. "We really want to build on this and make it something we can do two, three times a year, at a minimum."

During the exercise, the Marines and Canadian soldiers rotated between various stations, led by alternating Canadian and American instructors. They were also divided into mixed groups, squads of Marines and Canadian soldiers so they could learn from each other face-to-face.

"There are a lot of similarities between us and

the Canadian Forces," said Marlowe. "When we have so many similarities on how we conduct business, we can use that to our advantage. It's good to foster that relationship and build trust and confidence between our units."

Breaching, reacting to improvised explosive devices on patrol, foreign weapons familiarity and combat lifesaving were just a few of the skills the Marines and soldiers practiced with one another.

"Over the next 36 hours, you guys will have the opportunity to see how we do things," said Lt. Col. D.R. Stepaniuk, commanding officer of the Canadian unit, as he addressed the Marines and Canadian soldiers in a mass formation, before the training kicked-



A squad of Marines from I Company, 3rd Battalion, 25th Marine Regiment, based in Buffalo, N.Y., anxiously wait to maneuver toward a series of door-breaching obstacles as part of a small scale, bilateral exercise with the Canadian military April 20-22.

off. "Maybe some of our tactics and strategies will be the same, while some of them may be different, but at the end of the day we will all learn something from each other. That's why it's great for all of us to come together."

As the Marines and soldiers rotated between stations, interaction between the Marines and Canadian soldiers remained constant, whether it was exchanging infantry strategies and tactics, or war stories.

I Company returned from a seven-month Afghanistan deployment in spring 2011, and several of the Canadian reservists had also served in Afghanistan.

Cpl. Ryan Vine, a Canadian forces weapons system instructor and rifleman by trade with the Canadians, taught the Marines about the weapons Canadian Forces use. The four-year veteran used his time not only to instruct the Marines, but interact with them on a personal level.

"They're an energetic bunch," said Vine. "They

were very excited to learn about our weapons systems. I was also very excited to work with the Marines because I have never worked with them before."

Although the training only lasted about 48 hours, both the Canadian unit and I Company are looking forward to maintaining the relationship by having larger scale exercises with the Canadian forces to further develop both nations' interoperability.

"Hopefully they will go back to their subordinates, peers or higher headquarters and say good things, like we are going to do to them, so our relationship will possibly crescendo," said Marlowe.

Stepaniuk also shared Marlowe's sentiment.

"What we know as Canadians is that when we go to battle, the people we want to work with are the Americans, British and Australians," said Stepaniuk. "Your training standards and excellence are very high, so we can learn from you, the U.S. Marines."



Photos by Cpl. Lucas Vega

A squad of Marines from I Company, 3rd Battalion, 25th Marine Regiment, based in Buffalo, N.Y., anxiously wait to maneuver toward a series of door-breaching obstacles as part of a small-scale, bilateral exercise with the Canadian military April 20-22. The purpose of the training was to exchange infantry strategies and tactics as well as further enhance relationships and interoperability between the two military.

RANGE

CONTINUED FROM PAGE 1

experienced Marines.

Throughout the week, recruits were able to ask their shooting coaches for advice, but on qualification day, they no longer had that luxury.

Rct. Michael Merrifield, Platoon 3033, said having to account for the wind velocity, using different targets and making adjustments to his rifle was confusing.

"The hardest thing I see recruits have trouble with is making it harder than it is," Hernandez said. "The ones who have the most trouble overthink it. You give them the tools, and they have more than enough time to learn it. Yet, they overthink it and then they end up shooting bad."

This was the case with Rct. Mathew Anderson, Platoon 3032.

"I've never shot before, and the recoil scares me," said the 21-year-old native of Roanoke, Va.

Every time Anderson shot, he would

close his eyes before the round escaped the chamber of his M16-A4 rifle. This slight adjustment would move the direction of his shot. His shooting coaches talked to the recruit and closely observed him to ensure he would keep from closing his eyes.

"I shot horrible the first time," Anderson said. "The second time, I was one point from perfect."

Anderson said he then realized that he had to listen to the advice he was being given, because his shooting coaches were there to help and better him.

Rifle qualification is one of the moments in recruit training where recruits can control the outcome, Hernandez said

"If you shoot a bad shot, let it go," said the 31-year-old native of Midland, Texas. "You still have to get back in the fight."

The Marine Corps' training is making Meriwether stronger and building his character, he said. When he does get in a bad situation, he will stay calm and work it out.

"The biggest thing they learn is to

think on their feet," Hernandez said. "They aren't always going to have the

best situations to shoot in. They have to make due with what they got."



Photo by Lance Cpl. F.J. Abundes

Cpl. Thomas Mills, a shooting coach, speaks with recruits April 4 before they begin shooting for the day.

Changes to Helmand province through the eyes of a Marine

Cpl. Reece Lodder

Regimental Combat Team 5
1st Marine Division

GARMSIR DISTRICT, Afghanistan — Over the past seven months, I've seen and experienced progress in Afghanistan most Americans will never hear about from mainstream media.

Serving as a Marine combat correspondent with 3rd Battalion, 3rd Marine Regiment, in Helmand province's Garmsir district, I've been blessed with the unique opportunity of telling the stories of our Marines, sailors and counterparts with the Afghan National Security Forces.

While most of my fellow Marines operated from the same position with the same group of people, my duties as a writer and photographer allowed me to travel throughout our 80-kilometer-long area of operations to cover all five of our infantry and headquarters companies.

In recent years, Garmsir's green zone — the fertile, populated area surrounding the Helmand River and forming the shape of a snake — had

been the scene of heavy fighting between insurgents and coalition forces.

After gaining a foothold in Garmsir in 2008, British forces were augmented by the 24th Marine Expeditionary Unit. The British worked in the district for almost two years before turning over combat operations to 2nd Bn., 8th Marine Division, the first of eight Marine battalions to support Afghan forces here.

By the end of 1st Bn., 3rd Marine Regiment's deployment in November 2011, Garmsir was a model of security among Helmand's 14 districts. Insurgent activity was significantly reduced when compared to surrounding districts.

While the 'Lava Dogs' of 1st Bn.' 3rd Marines had worked alongside ANSF throughout their deployment, the evolution of security in Garmsir left my battalion with a different mission. We stepped into a position of overwatch and looked toward the transition of lead security responsibility in the district from Marines to Afghan forces.

Early in the deployment, I joined India Company to

support the Afghan National Army and Police in clearing strains of insurgent activity in central Garmsir's buzzing Safar Bazaar. The new year brought a helicopter-borne clearing operation in northern Garmsir with Lima Company and the ANA. During subsequent months, I patrolled with Weapons Company and the Afghan Border Police in southern Garmsir, and Kilo Company and the ANP spread throughout the district.

From the outset, I found most of the ANSF I worked with to be well trained and capable of operating on their own, especially the ANA — a testimony to their combat experience and the hard work of previous Marine mentors.

However, after years of combat and logistical support from coalition forces, they were reluctant to plan and operate alone.

As weeks and months progressed, I watched our Marines wean the ANSF off their dependence on us. They stepped into the periphery and pushed Afghan forces to strengthen Garmsir's security. They helped them understand that bolstered security



Afghan Local Police Officer Abdul Salaam provides security along the edge of a compound while fellow policemen and Marines with 1st Platoon, Kilo Company, 3rd Battalion, 3rd Marine Regiment, search the compound for possible insurgent material during Operation Zema Parma Sar Tera in Helmand province April 14.

would enable commerce to develop, and governance to deepen its roots.

Garmsir's police force grew from approximately 300 to 600 patrolmen. A second ANA battalion — 6th Kandak, 1st Brigade, 215th Corps — arrived in southern Garmsir to augment Marines based in the north. In the eastern desert near Khan Neshin district, the ABP expanded south to prevent the movement of drugs and insurgent logistics into Garmsir.

Security increased around the district's bazaars and commerce followed. Protected by ANSF vehicle checkpoints throughout Garmsir, local citizens celebrated the Afghan New Year in mid-March safe from the insurgent threat.

District community council elections were held April 17 in Hazar Joft without incident. The successful elections enabled governance historically centered around the district center to expand into areas previously lacking representation by the Afghan government.

Over the past seven months, I experienced significant, historic development built on the sacrifices of thousands of Afghan and coalition forces. I witnessed positive progress in Garmsir that has largely been ignored by the mainstream media.

During this time, I captured Marines, sailors and Afghan forces in 9,300 photographs, 62 stories and standalone photo essays, and 16 video packages. I'm proud I had the opportunity to share their stories with the families of men

sacrificing to make a difference and every American supporting their efforts.

In coming weeks, 3rd Bn., 8th Marines, will relieve 3rd Bn., 3rd Marines. The incoming Marines will continue to assist ANSF on a journey marked by both hardship and progress.

In months and years to come, the Afghan forces will face their greatest challenges. Far from home, we've sweat and bled to prepare them to the best of our abilities. It will be up to them to stand on their own and defend their people.



Photos by Cpl. Reece Lodder

Afghan National Police Officer Charyogli Allahberdi searches a local man at a vehicle checkpoint outside the Hazar Joft Bazaar with U.S. Marines from Guard Force Platoon, 3rd Battalion, 3rd Marine Regiment, during Operation Gridlock in Helmand province, Afghanistan, March 21.



Afghan National Police Officer Abdul Khaled, left, provides security outside the Garmsir Agricultural High School while Sher Agha, right, searches local elders waiting to vote in district community council elections April 17.

MCRD PARRIS ISLAND EXPANDED FAMILY DAY SCHEDULE

MCRD Parris Island has expanded the events and activities available to families who are coming aboard the Depot to see their son or daughter graduate and become a Marine. The adjacent schedule outlines the events that are now offered to our new Marines' families and loved ones. The times and locations of these events are subject to change. For the most current information, please visit <http://www.mccs-sc.com/recruitfamilies>.



Wednesday

Welcome to Family Orientation Day at Parris Island

- 6AM-10PMMarine Corps Exchange (MCX) Open
- 6AM-6PMMarine Corps Exchange (MCX) Food Court Open
- 7AM-5PMEngraving Shop open
- 7:30AM-4PMDouglas Visitors' Center open - please register upon arrival
Java Café (9AM-11:30AM)
Graduation Station (8AM-4PM)
- 9AM-4PMFamily Check-in at the Douglas Visitors' Center; Java Café open 9AM-12PM
- 10AM-12:30PM.....Marine Corps 101, including a "Behind the Scenes" tour, at Douglas Visitors' Center
- LUNCH.....Traditions (Officer/SNCO Club), Food Court, Subway, Golf Course, Back Yard Burgers
- 1:30PM-3:30PMFamily Orientation Brief at the Lyceum
- 5PM-8PM.....Steak Night at Traditions (Officer/SNCO Club).
Reservations required

Thursday

Welcome to Family Liberty Day at Parris Island

- 6AM-4PMDouglas Visitors' Center open - please register upon arrival
Java Café (6AM-2PM)
Graduation Station (6AM-4PM)
- 6AM-10PMMarine Corps Exchange (MCX) Open
- 6AM-6PMMarine Corps Exchange (MCX) Food Court Open
- 7AM-5PMEngraving Shop open
- 7AMMot/National Run - Peatross Parade Deck
- 8AMDepot Museum Opens
- 8:15AMAll Weather Training Facility (AWTF) Opens
- 9:30AM-10AM.....Battalion Commander's Brief to Families & Liberty Ceremony (AWTF)
- 10AM-2PMMarksmanship Training Unit Open House
- 10AM.....Liberty Begins
- 10:30AM-1PM.....Family Day Buffet at the Lyceum - new Marines eat for free!
- 2PMWarrior's Prayer at the Recruit Chapel
- 3PMLiberty Ends
- 3PM-4PM.....Marine Corps 101 at Douglas Visitors' Center
- 5PMMeet & Greet with Depot Command at Traditions Lounge
- 5:30PM.....Welcome from the Command
- 5:45PM.....Family Day Dinner with Depot Command at Traditions (Officer/SNCO Club)
Advance reservations guarantee admittance

Friday

Welcome to Graduation Day at Parris Island

- 6AM-2PMDouglas Visitors' Center open
Java Café (6AM-12PM)
Graduation Station (6AM-12PM)
- 6AM-10PMMarine Corps Exchange (MCX) Open
- 6AM-6PMMarine Corps Exchange (MCX) Food Court Open
- 7AM-5PMEngraving Shop open
- 7:45AMMorning Colors at Barrow Hall
- 9AM-10AM.....Graduation at Peatross Parade Deck (weather permitting)
- 11AM-1PMLunch Buffet at Traditions (Officer/SNCO Club)