FLIGHT JACKET

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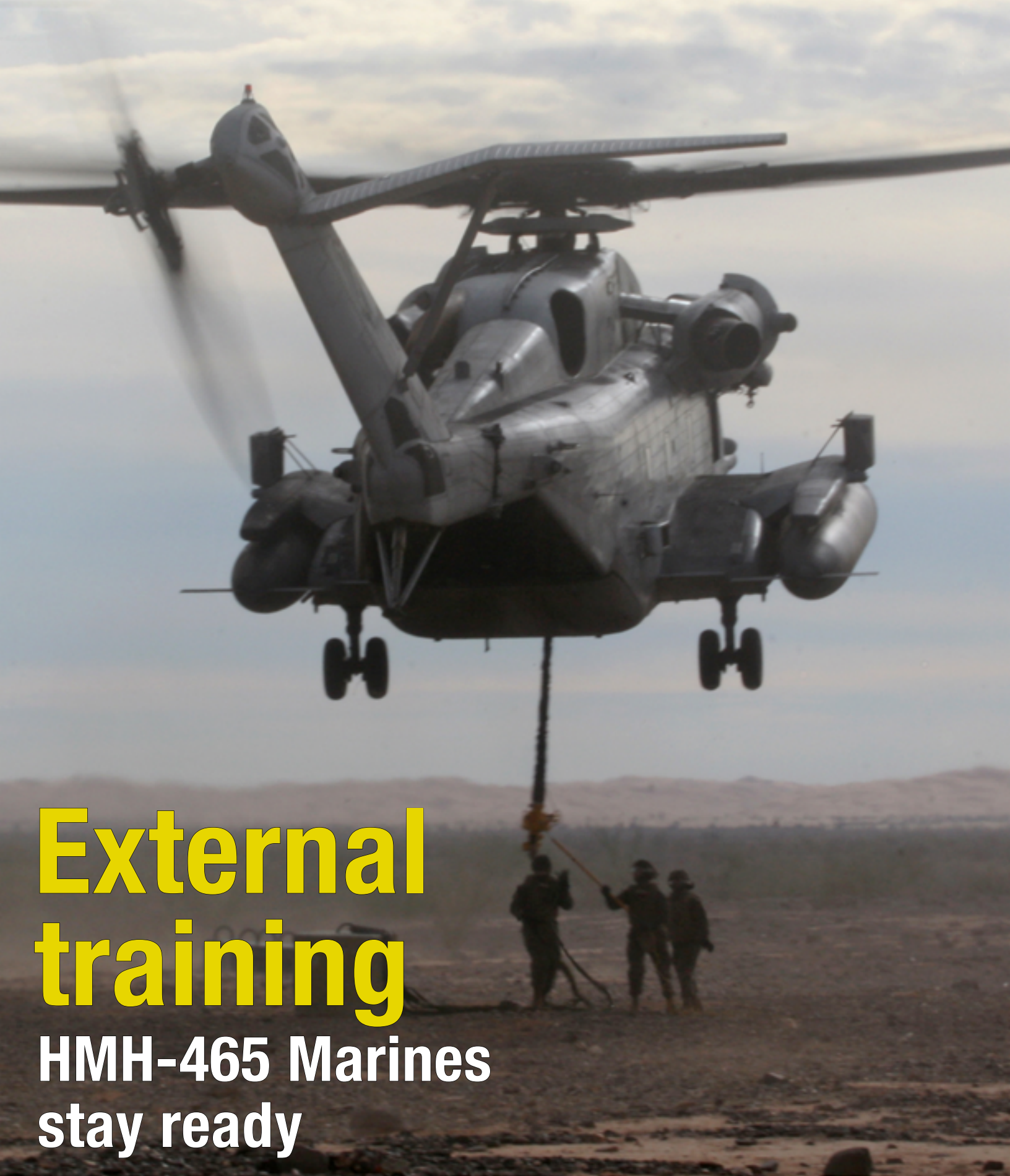

External training

HMH-465 Marines stay ready

Japanese dignitaries preview MV-22B

Two members of the Japanese House of Representatives visited to better understand the MV-22B Osprey aircraft that will soon be stationed aboard Marine Corps air stations in Japan.

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Running toward fires: Miramar Fire Department

The MCAS Miramar firefighters were put the test during a training exercise while equipped with only fire-proof clothing and an Air-Pak containing 30 minutes of usable oxygen.

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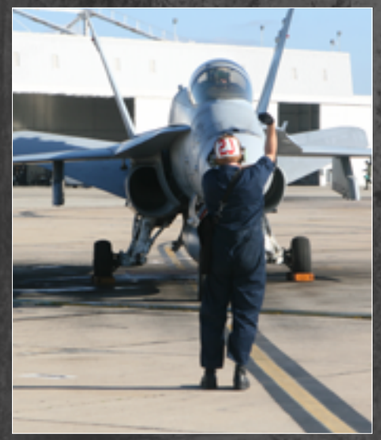

Plane captains on the line

Powerline plane captains with Marine Fighter Attack Training Squadron 101 spend all day ensuring the FA-18 is ready for flight.

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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.

ON THE COVER:

EL CENTRO, Calif. – A Helicopter Support Team attaches a concrete block to a CH-53E from Marine Heavy Helicopter Squadron 465 during external lift training 20 miles east of here Jan. 11. Marines from Helicopter Support Team, Combat Logistics Battalion 5 from Marine Corps Base Camp Pendleton partnered with HMH-465 from Marine Corps Air Station Miramar to practice external cargo lifts. (Photo by Lance Cpl. Rebecca Eller)

Retired Sgt. Maj. Roger E. Jenness, center, the former Marine Corps Air Station Miramar sergeant major, prepares to return the sword of office to Col. Frank A. Richie, the MCAS Miramar commanding officer, before being relieved of his post by Sgt. Maj. Bonnie L. Skinner during a relief and appointment ceremony at the parade deck here Jan. 13. Jenness enlisted in the Marine Corps March 23, 1982 and retired after 30 years of service.

A color guard marches on the parade deck for the pass and review during the relief and appointment ceremony of retired Sgt. Maj. Roger E. Jenness, the former Marine Corps Air Station Miramar sergeant major, here Jan. 13.

MCAS Miramar says goodbye to Jenness, welcomes Skinner

Photos by Cpl. Alexandra M. Vazquez

Retired Sgt. Maj. Roger E. Jenness, center right, the former Marine Corps Air Station Miramar sergeant major, receives an award from Col. Frank A. Richie, the MCAS Miramar commanding officer, during Jenness' retirement ceremony at the parade deck here Jan. 13. Jenness served in the Marine Corps for 30 years before being relieved of his post by Sgt. Maj. Bonnie L. Skinner during a relief and appointment ceremony the same day.

Sergeant Major of the Marine Corps tours MCAS Miramar

Photos by Lance Cpl. Rebecca Eller

Sgt. Maj. Micheal P. Barrett, Sergeant Major of the Marine Corps, talks with the Grappling Club here Jan. 10. Barrett toured facilities on MCAS Miramar such as the Carlos Hathcock Range, the Joint Reception Center and the Grappling Club to meet with junior Marines.

Sgt. Maj. Micheal P. Barrett, Sergeant Major of the Marine Corps, talks with Marines at the Carlos Hathcock Range about the successful shooting average here Jan. 10. Barrett toured the Carlos Hathcock Range, the Joint Reception Center, Gonzalez Hall and other facilities at the station to meet with junior Marines.

Sgt. Maj. Micheal P. Barrett, Sergeant Major of the Marine Corps, discusses range operations on the Carlos Hathcock Range here Jan. 10. Barrett toured facilities and met with junior Marines on MCAS Miramar.

Sgt. Maj. Micheal P. Barrett, Sergeant Major of the Marine Corps, talks with a Marine on the firing line at Carlos Hathcock Range here Jan. 10. Barrett toured MCAS Miramar's facilities and met with junior Marines.

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Marines and Japanese dignitaries escort Shozo Azuma, member of the Japanese House of Representatives, Democratic Party of Japan to an MV-22B Osprey for Azuma's first flight, Jan. 19. Japanese dignitaries visited the air station to learn more about the aircraft before 1st Marine Aircraft Wing, based out of Okinawa, Japan, receives its first Osprey.

Maj. Gen. Andrew O'Donnell Jr., commanding general of 3rd Marine Aircraft Wing, speaks with Shozo Azuma, member of the Japanese House of Representatives, Democratic Party of Japan, before Azuma's first flight aboard an MV-22B Osprey, Jan. 19.

Staff Sgt. Jacob E. Merrell, an MV-22B crew chief with Marine Medium Tiltrotor Squadron 561 and a Sisters, Ore., native, aides Shozo Azuma, member of the Japanese House of Representatives, Democratic Party of Japan, and other dignitaries aboard an MV-22B Osprey for Azuma's first flight, Jan. 19.

Shozo Azuma, member of the Japanese House of Representatives, Democratic Party of Japan, walks with Marines and other dignitaries to an MV-22B Osprey for Azuma's first flight, Jan. 19. Japanese dignitaries visited the air station to learn more about the aircraft before 1st Marine Aircraft Wing, based out of Okinawa, Japan, receives its first Osprey.

Japanese dignitaries preview MV-22B

Story and photos by Lance Cpl. Erica DiSalvo

Two members of the Japanese House of Representatives visited Marine Corps Air Station Miramar, Calif., Jan. 19 to better understand the MV-22B Osprey aircraft that will soon be stationed aboard the Marine Corps' air stations in Japan.

Two members of the Japanese House of Representatives visited Marine Corps Air Station Miramar, Calif., Jan. 19 to better understand the MV-22B Osprey aircraft that will soon be stationed aboard the Marine Corps' air stations in Japan.

Shozo Azuma, the Democratic Party of Japan's Chairman of the Lower House Committee on Security, and Mikio Shimoji, the People's New Party of Japan's Secretary-General, Chairman of Policy Research Council, head of Election Strategy Headquarters and member of the Lower House Committee on Security, experienced the Osprey's flight transition capabilities first hand after a tour and brief on the benefits of replacing the CH-46E Sea Knights throughout Marine Corps' bases in Japan.

"Our main goal in inviting these officials into our squadron is to reinforce the Marine Corps' confidence in this aircraft and its capabilities," said Maj. Stephen Conley, the operations officer with Marine Medium Tiltrotor Squadron 561 and a Santa Clarita, Calif., native. "We want to explain all of advantages the Osprey holds over the [CH-46]."

This visit marks the second trip in which Japanese officials have visited a 3rd Marine Aircraft Wing Osprey squadron in an attempt to understand the aircraft that will soon be operational in Japan.

Twelve aircraft are scheduled to arrive to the 1st Marine Aircraft Wing based in Okinawa, Japan, by December 2012. After approximately one year, a final group of 12 more MV-22B's will arrive.

Roughly 50 percent of VMM-561's personnel will be sent to 1st MAW for the transition, explained Lt. Col. Brent Reiffer, the Headquarters Marine Corps representative for United States and Japan Alliance Pacific, during the tour's question and answer brief.

The officials began their tour aboard the air station with rides in an Osprey simulator to learn how the aircraft operates in preparation for flights.

This was followed by a detailed safety brief where the dignitaries' questions concerning the hazards of the aircraft's use in Japan were addressed. At this time the officials were encouraged to tour and board the aircraft to understand its dimensions.

The following flight was approximately 45 minutes long and consisted of landing drills simulating the length of a runway aboard an aircraft carrier. These drills allowed passengers to experience the Osprey's dual methods of take-off, acting as either a helicopter or a plane.

As the tour ended and Azuma and Shimoji departed MCAS Miramar, many Marine Corps officials hoped they would not only have a better understanding of the aircraft but will view the MV-22B Osprey as an asset within the country of Japan.

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(Above) Cast with the Nickelodeon television show "iCarly" answered questions with Marines and their families at the Bob Hope Theater here Jan. 9. Those who attended previewed an iCarly episode featuring First Lady Michelle Obama. The new episode aired Jan 16. (Photo by Lance Cpl. Rebecca Eller)

(Left) The cast of the Nickelodeon television show "iCarly" visited Marines and their families at the Bob Hope Theater here Jan. 9. Those who attended previewed the episode featuring First Lady Michelle Obama, which aired Jan. 16. (Photo by Lance Cpl. Rebecca Eller)

(Below) Marines and their families received free popcorn and drinks for the sneak preview of an "iCarly" episode at the Bob Hope Theater here Jan. 9. The cast of iCarly answered questions after the preview of their new episode featuring First Lady Michelle Obama. The show aired Jan. 16. (Photo by Lance Cpl. Rebecca Eller)

iCo to Miramar:
'iCarly' cast visits for premiere

Marines and their families waited hours for an up-close visit with the cast of "iCarly" and a special preview for an episode at the Bob Hope Theater here Jan. 9. The Nickelodeon iCarly episode featured First Lady Michelle Obama and aired Jan 16. (Photo by Lance Cpl. Rebecca Eller)

The cast of the Nickelodeon television show "iCarly" signed autographs before a special screening of an episode at the Bob Hope Theater here Jan. 9. Marines and their families previewed the episode featuring First Lady Michelle Obama. The show aired Jan. 16. (Photo by Lance Cpl. Rebecca Eller)

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Air-to-ground refuel practice via Osprey

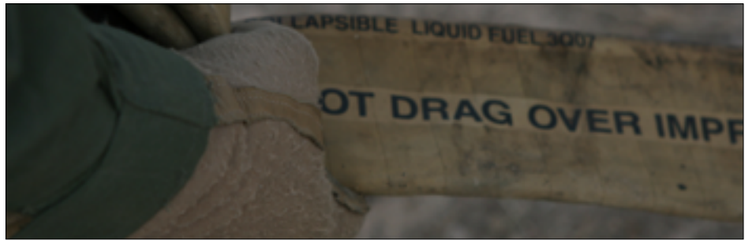
Story and photos by Pfc. Christopher D. Johns

MARINE CORPS AIR GROUND COMBAT CENTER TWENTYNINE PALMS, Calif. – A Bravo Company, 3rd Light Armored Reconnaissance Battalion Marine from MCAGCC Twentynine Palms, guides an LAV to the refueling station here Jan. 11. The LAVs were part of the training for a rapid-ground refuel conducted with Marine Medium Tiltrotor Squadron 161.

MARINE CORPS AIR GROUND COMBAT CENTER TWENTYNINE PALMS, Calif. – An MV-22B Osprey conducts a rapid-ground-refuel training exercise here Jan. 11. The rapid-ground refuel took place in support of Bravo Company, 3rd Light Armored Reconnaissance Battalion, who were evaluated for Enhanced Mojave Viper training.

MARINE CORPS AIR GROUND COMBAT CENTER TWENTYNINE PALMS, Calif. – Marines with Marine Medium Tiltrotor Squadron 161 "Greyhawks" performed a rapid-ground-refuel training exercise aboard Marine Corps Air Ground Combat Center Twentynine Palms, Calif., Jan. 11.

Two MV-22B Osprey crews with VMM-161 flew to Twentynine Palms in support of Bravo Company, 3rd Light Armored Reconnaissance Battalion, who were evaluated for Enhanced Mojave Viper training, to practice RGR.



MARINE CORPS AIR GROUND COMBAT CENTER TWENTYNINE PALMS, Calif. – A Marine with Marine Medium Tiltrotor Squadron 161 rolls a hose after a rapid-ground-refueling training exercise was complete here Jan. 11.

"RGR is a mission assigned to medium assault support aircraft, and it is one that we will continue to do," said Capt. Newel R. Bartlett, the quality assurance officer with VMM-161 and a Thousand Oaks, Calif., native. "VMM-161 has done RGR with [light attack and utility helicopters] and [Light Armored Vehicles], and we are scheduled to do it numerous times at EMV."

Rapid ground refuel is useful in combat situations when LAVs, which cover large areas of territory while on patrol, need fuel to carry on their mission. The air support element flies out to the LAV patrol area and provides fuel when the call is given.

After landing, the crew members of both aircraft quickly set up the refuel station before the arrival of the LAVs.

While waiting in the refuel station, LAV Marines assisted the Osprey crew members with the task at hand.

Less than an hour later, each fully-fueled LAV prowled through its assigned territory.

"[Marine Air Ground Task Force] training is the best training that we get," said Bartlett. "Both units get to perform their missions and there are always learning points that come from the interaction."

These points include how to set up the refuel site, certain precautions when landing the Ospreys and proficiency at getting all the gear set up.

After accomplishing their mission and stowing the gear away, the Greyhawks flew off into the direction of the setting sun. These training missions prepare and ensure future missions run smoothly and safely.

For more photos click HERE

MARINE CORPS AIR GROUND COMBAT CENTER TWENTYNINE PALMS, Calif. – Cpl. Ricardo Enriquez, right, a flightline mechanic with Marine Medium Tiltrotor Squadron 161 'Greyhawks' and a LaBelle, Fla., native, listens to another crew member during a flight here Jan. 11.

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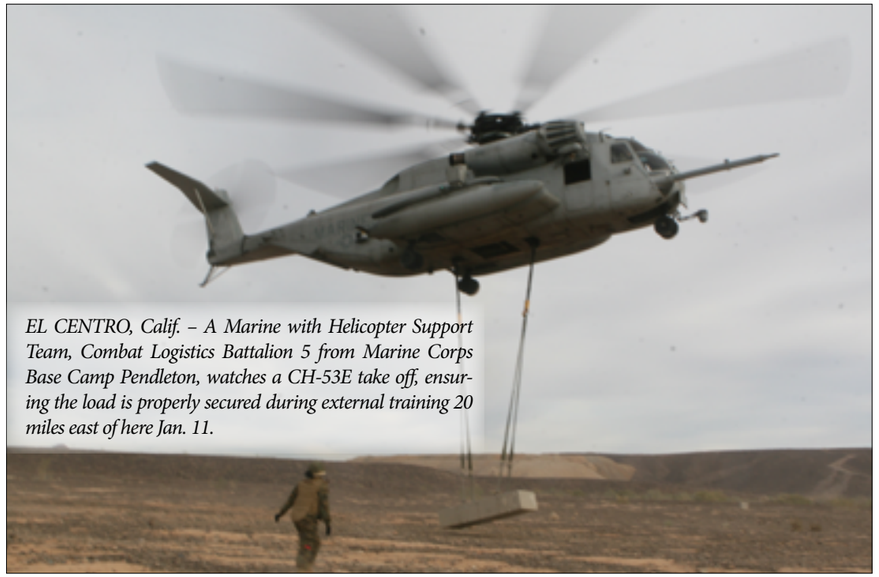
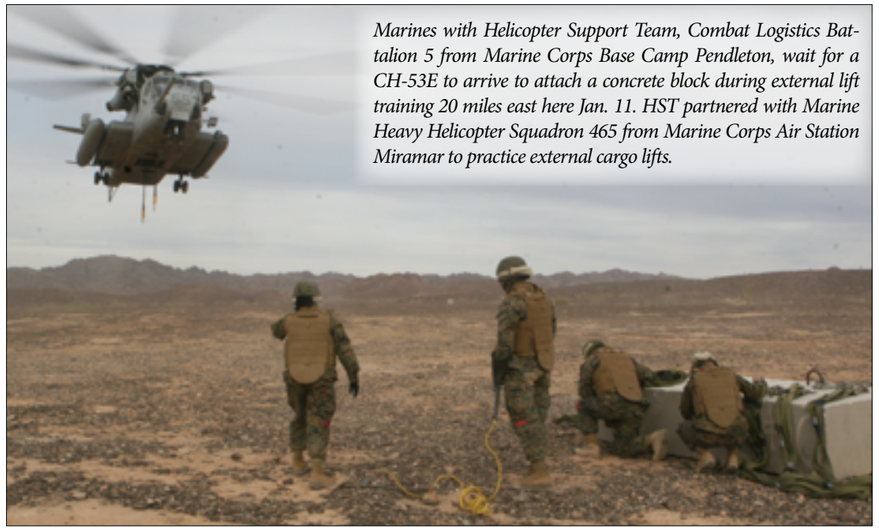
Operation external lift-up

Story and photos by Lance Cpl. Rebecca Eller



EL CENTRO, Calif. – A Marine with Helicopter Support Team, Combat Logistics Battalion 5 from Marine Corps Base Camp Pendleton, watches a CH-53E take off, ensuring the load is properly secured during external training 20 miles east of here Jan. 11.



Marines with Helicopter Support Team, Combat Logistics Battalion 5 from Marine Corps Base Camp Pendleton, wait for a CH-53E to arrive to attach a concrete block during external lift training 20 miles east here Jan. 11. HST partnered with Marine Heavy Helicopter Squadron 465 from Marine Corps Air Station Miramar to practice external cargo lifts.

Lifting 20,000 pounds is no easy task, especially when Marines need equipment fast. Ensuring the process to deliver that equipment goes smoothly requires hours of training.

Marine Heavy Helicopter Squadron 465 from Marine Corps Air Station Miramar partnered with Marines with Helicopter Support Team, Combat Logistics Battalion 5 from Marine Corps Base Camp Pendleton to practice external cargo lifts Jan. 11.

HMH-465 and HST conducted nearly a dozen lifts between two CH-53E helicopters, lifting concrete blocks used for training purposes at a site located 20 miles east of El Centro, Calif.

During externals training, HST Marines must brave high winds and rotor wash to connect large concrete blocks using dual-point or single-point hook external systems. These systems are large hooks that hang out of the "hell hole" located under the CH-53E.

"The primary mission of the 53 is heavy lifting for the Marine Corps," said Capt. Justin Amthor, a Weapons and Tactics instructor with HMH-465 and a Cadillac, Mich., native. "We complete that heavy lift by conducting externals."

HMH-465 Marines train with cement blocks, but actual mission flights range from water bowls to humvees or generators.

Conducting training is important because if something were to go wrong, the crew chief and pilots learn to overcome obstacles, said Cpl. Adam Mintz, a crew chief with HMH-465 and a Lexington, S.C., native.

Crew chiefs are responsible for the integrity of the aircraft, and make sure everything for the flight is ready to go. Crew chiefs take care of the area from the cock pit back, including the tail gun, loading and unloading of cargo and calling externals, said Mintz.

Pilots can only see in front of them, making communication between the pilots and their crew chief essential to complete the mission.

"Crew chiefs are our eyes in the back," said Capt. Matthew Bauman, a 3rd Marine Aircraft Wing aviation safety officer with HMH-465. "They talk us over the load, tell us what they want and tell us which way to move the aircraft to keep everybody safe."

Other than heavy lifting capabilities, another benefit of external lifts is getting out of the drop zone fast.

"Internal cargo you have to land and manually offload it," said Amthor. "With externals, we just come in, drop it off and depart the area within a couple of minutes."

Staying up to date on training is a main reason externals are performed in garrison. This particular training was to train new Marines with HMH-465 on external procedures.

"We're constantly getting new people, and we need everybody to have that high level of proficiency," said Mintz. "So when that time comes and we have to do it for real, we're ready to go."

For more photos click HERE

Running toward fires: Miramar Fire Department

Story by Lance Cpl. Rebecca Eller

Photos by Cpl. Isaac Lamberth

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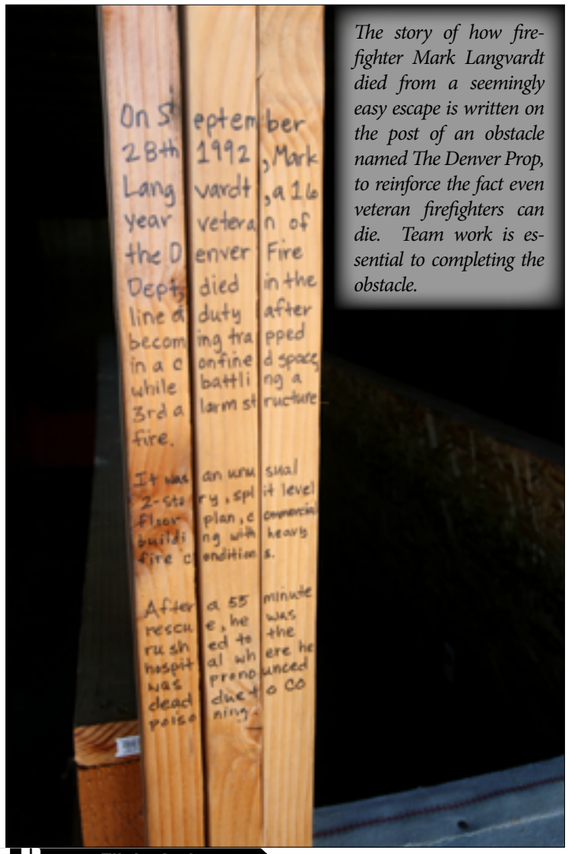
Probationary firefighter Alex Ramos removes the limp body of a fellow fighter from The Denver Prop during a training exercise, Jan. 20. The obstacle tests firefighters' abilities to work as a team to move an unconscious victim out of a confined space.



The story of how firefighter Mark Langvardt died from a seemingly easy escape is written on the post of an obstacle named The Denver Prop, to reinforce the fact even veteran firefighters can die. Team work is essential to completing the obstacle.

Equipped with only fireproof clothing and an Air-Pak containing 30 minutes of usable oxygen, the MCAS Miramar firefighters were put to the test Jan. 19 during a training exercise.

Two firefighters were sent through multiple stations to test their physical fitness with the limited oxygen supply.

While a typical Air-Pak contains 30 minutes of air supply, firefighters are under stress and performing physical activity, reducing the actual usable air by about 50 percent.

"Both of [the firefighters participating] made it to about 15 minutes," said Garry Flores, a firefighter with the Miramar Fire Department and a Springfield, Mass., native. "This is standard for continuous activity, like they have done today, like you would fighting a fire."

Continued next page

Lead instructor Gary Flores shows how to properly adjust gear on an unconscious firefighter before probationary firefighters maneuver The Denver Prop obstacle during an training exercise, Jan. 20.

Assistant chief Josh Allen, center, talks probationary fire recruits Alex Ramos, left, and Michael Chambers, right, through how to descend from a second story building Jan. 20. The two fire recruits spent the morning learning different techniques to descend from a multilevel building.

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Lead instructor Gary Flores repairs the interior of The Firefighters Obstacle Course, Jan. 20. Nicknamed, Malfunction Junction, firefighters are required to maneuver through the confined obstacle, which consists of several walls that must be breached in addition to a small crawl space and other debris blocking their paths.

The self-survival tests are conducted to ensure firefighters are not only acquainted with their gear but know its capabilities.

"It's huge for us to be confident and have confidence in our equipment," said Flores. "As far as repelling with the rope, or we're fighting fire with a hose, all the way down to our Air-Pak."

This training not only deals with confidence in equipment, but checks physical fitness as well, explained Alex Ramos, a probationary firefighter with the Miramar Fire Department and a Santee, Calif., native.

The test is meant to prepare and put firefighters in the mind state where they have to keep an open mind and keep moving, explained Ramos.

This particular test was conducted for the new firefighters coming aboard, but the firefighters with the Miramar Fire Department are constantly conducting training to always stay ready.

Probationary fire recruit Michael Chambers climbs onto a ladder head first while learning the Ladder Bail Out technique, Jan. 20. The method is used in extreme situations to hastily remove one's self from a building.

Probationary fire recruits attempt to remove a fellow firefighter from The Denver Prop. This obstacle tests firefighters' abilities to work as a team, removing an unconscious victim from a confined space.

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MALS-16 Marines get inspired

A Marine with Marine Aviation Logistics Squadron 16 performs pull-ups to warm up before physical training here Jan. 20. Ten sergeants with MALS-16 took part in a weekly PT session with Sgt. Maj. Jean-Paul Courville, the squadron sergeant major. The Marines performed various exercises that focused on the core, upper and lower body.

Story and photos by Pfc. Christopher D. Johns

It was dark. Fog could be clearly seen billowing out of the mouths of 10 sergeants as they listened to the sergeant major speak passionately about the physical training to come.

Sgt. Maj. Jean-Paul Courville, sergeant major of Marine Aviation Logistics Squadron 16, took two Marines from every shop in the command to give them a Professional Military Education session on leadership and taking the Marine Corps back to its combative roots in physical training.

The Marines who went on the PT session with Courville worked hard, doing everything from pull ups and jogging to circuit courses. The MALS-16 Marines also completed a lower body workout that included squats, lunges and alternating leg-lifts, as well as a core workout.

"The whole purpose of this is combat conditioning in small groups instead of having 200 [non-commissioned officers] in one large formation once a month," said Courville. "I choose to do this every Friday with ten Marines. Why? I get a chance to know who you are and where you work."

Courville spoke on topics ranging from physical fitness to leadership and mentoring.

"Some of you have seen Marines retire or get out of the Corps and do the same job as a civilian," said Courville. "What you can't contract out as a civilian is being a Marine. That means the entitlements of being a warrior, our warrior ethos, running our combat fitness test, going to the rifle range and living day-to-day as a warrior."

Courville impressed upon the Marines that being a warrior and being combat ready in everything they do is crucial. The Marines listened.

"The sergeant major really drives the point across that every Marine is a warrior and a rifleman first, and we train like that on a constant basis to keep that mindset," said Sgt. Clayton Coker, the receiving noncommissioned officer in charge at the aviation supply department of MALS-16 and a Dawsonville, Ga., native.

Continued next page

Sgt. Maj. Jean-Paul Courville, the squadron sergeant major with Marine Aviation Logistics Squadron 16, demonstrates plyometric push-ups here Jan. 20. Every Friday ten sergeants from MALS-16 perform combat conditioning with Courville. The MALS-16 Marines received Professional Military Education sessions on leadership and mentoring as well.

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Sgt. Maj. Jean-Paul Courville, the squadron sergeant major with Marine Aviation Logistics Squadron 16, demonstrates plyometric push-ups here Jan. 20. Every Friday ten sergeants from MALS-16 perform combat conditioning with Courville. The MALS-16 Marines received Professional Military Education sessions on leadership and mentoring as well.

Marines with Marine Aviation Logistics Squadron 16 perform sled training drills here Jan. 20. The combat conditioning program these Marines used involved a variety of different exercises using nothing but human body weight.

Coker described Courville's inspiration as a wave crashing against a shore.

He said the Marines take all of the inspiration and motivation that Courville gives them, use it, then give it right back the sergeant major.

Courville's motivation and inspiration showed the entire morning as he and Gunnery Sgt. Jonathon P. McIntosh, the squadron gunnery sergeant, performed all the exercises he told the sergeants to execute.

The Marines watched as Courville demonstrated the way he believes Marines should be led – from the front.

"Gen. Dwight D. Eisenhower used to give a simple instruction about leadership," said Courville. "He took a string and put it on a desk, one string, and he pulled the string then he would say 'look, if you pull it, it will follow you anywhere; but if I push the string it absolutely does nothing.' So think about that in the context of leadership. If you pull something, it'll follow you, but if you try to push something too hard it doesn't go anywhere."

Once finished with the workout, Courville sat with the Marines and spoke more on inspiring and mentoring, how they needed to not only seek it for themselves, but to actively give inspiration and guidance to the Marines in their charge.

After a brief back-and-forth question and answer session, the Marines stood in a circle with their hands on top of each others', and then on the count of three, gave a loud chorus of "Marine Corps," concluding the PT session with the sergeant major until next Friday, when Courville takes another ten Marines.

For more photos click HERE

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Col. Frank A. Richie, center, commanding officer of Marine Corps Air Station Miramar, Calif., runs in the 5K Flight Line Dash here Jan. 21. The race is a non-profit fundraiser for the Officers' Wives' Club Education Scholarship fund.

Children chase Capt. Andrew Mettler, right, a pilot with Marine Fighter Attack Training Squadron 101 and a Marietta, Ga., native and Capt. Michael Drozd, a pilot with Marine Heavy Helicopter Squadron 465 and a Hillsboro, N.J., native during the Kid's 1K aviator scramble here Jan. 21. The aviator scramble was one of the races in a Flight Line Dash hosted by the Officers' Wives' Club.

Runners stretch before a Flight Line Dash hosted by the Officers' Wives' Club here Jan. 21. Sponsors provided snacks and prizes for runners upon completion of the races. Runners had the option to run either a 5K or a 10K.

On your mark, get set, Flight Line Dash

Story and photos by Lance Cpl. Rebecca Eller

Nearly 400 runners gathered at Hanger Zero for the first Flight Line Dash hosted by the Officers' Wives' Club aboard Marine Corps Air Station Miramar Jan. 21. The Flight Line Dash is a non-profit fundraiser for the OWC Education Scholarship fund.

The course ran parallel down the flight line and consisted of a 10K, 5K and a 1K kid's "aviator scramble." Snacks, activities and face paintings were available and more than three dozen raffle and finisher prizes were given away after the races.

The kids 1K was a non-traditional run where kids chased after two pilots in hopes of catching one to receive a prize. The first ten kids to do so were rewarded.

The race raised funds to help provide educational scholarships to military dependants.

"All of the funds go directly to the scholarship fund, which benefits Miramar ," said Marianne Gatti, the event day coordinator and a Rock Springs , Wyo. , native.

Though it was raining during the race, runners did not seem to mind the wet weather to support the race's cause.

"My father was in the Marine Corps, so I try to run a lot of the military runs, give a little support," said Marshall Varano, first place finisher for the 5K run and a San Diego native.

After the races were live music performances, prize give-a-ways, a bounce house and games for kids.

With the success of the first Flight Line Dash, hopes of another race next year look positive.

"For our first go at it, we're excited," said Gatti. "We're hoping to make it an annual tradition."

Scholarship applications from the OWC Education Scholarship will be available soon for active duty, retired or deceased service members' dependants.

For more photos click HERE

Service members and families race in either the 5K or 10K Flight Line Dash hosted by the Officers' Wives' Club here Jan. 21. The race raised funds to help provide educational scholarships to military dependants.

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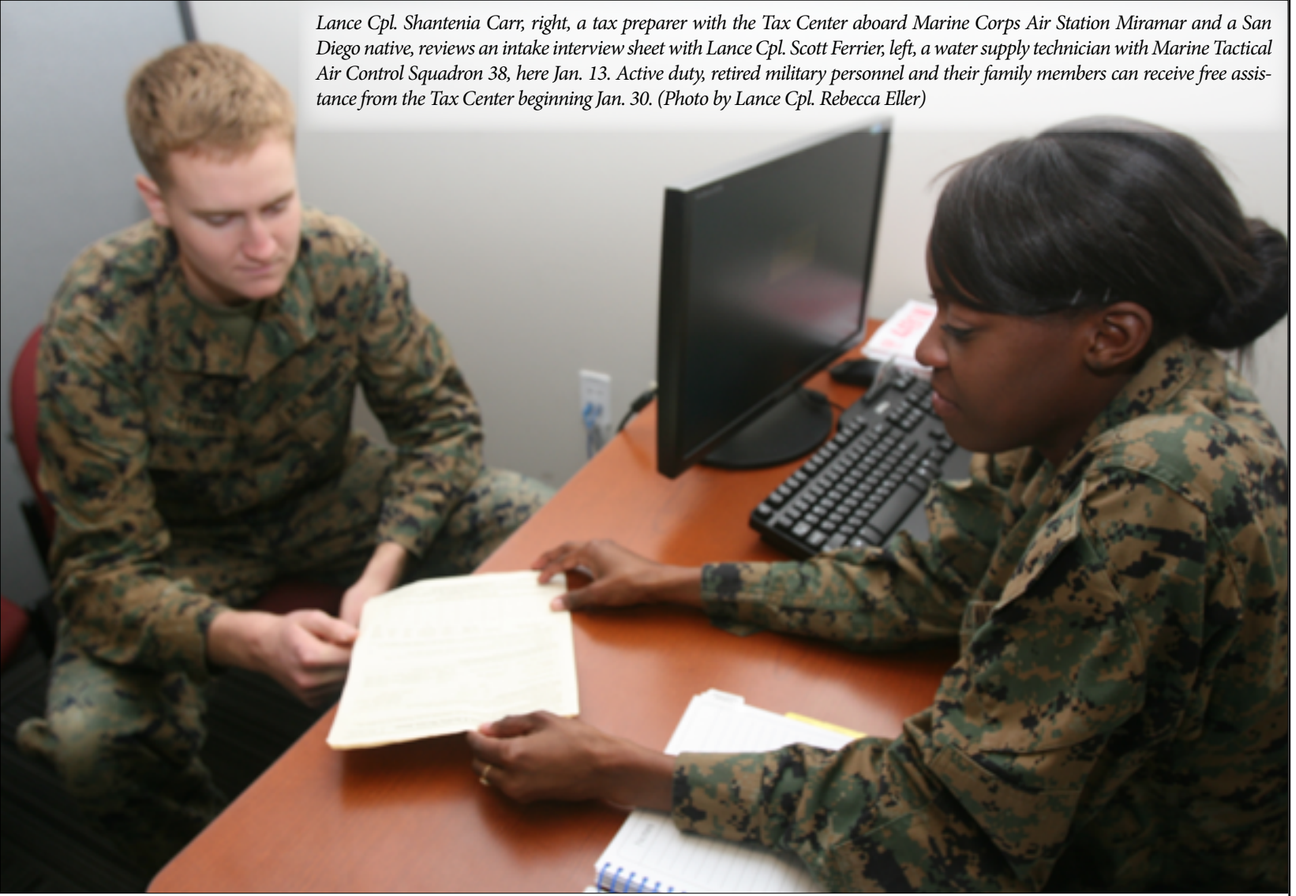


Lance Cpl. Shantenia Carr, right, a tax preparer with the Tax Center aboard Marine Corps Air Station Miramar and a San Diego native, reviews an intake interview sheet with Lance Cpl. Scott Ferrier, left, a water supply technician with Marine Tactical Air Control Squadron 38, here Jan. 13. Active duty, retired military personnel and their family members can receive free assistance from the Tax Center beginning Jan. 30. (Photo by Lance Cpl. Rebecca Eller)

Crunch, prepare, file: tax season at Miramar

Story by Lance Cpl. Rebecca Eller

It is about the time of year to stress over tax returns and hope for a little bit of cash back. Although service members might dread going to a tax preparer to pay money just to try getting money back, there is a solution.

Active duty, retired military personnel and their family members can receive free assistance from the Tax Center here beginning Jan. 30.

The Tax Center is located in building 6275 in the Legal Assistance area. Personnel are ready to assist walk-ins with their federal and state returns beginning Jan. 30, Monday through Friday, 8 a.m. to 4:30 p.m.

Military taxpayers must bring their military identification card, Social Security card, W-2s and the appropriate form to be filled, such as the 1040.

Marines who help with tax preparation are trained by the IRS and the state board.

Before the center opens to the public, Tax Center personnel constantly file mock returns to accurately and efficiently file returns.

Tax preparers will also ensure Marines receive the highest tax return possible.

"We look to see if we can get you everything back," said Sgt. Stanley Edouard, the Tax Center's noncommissioned officer in charge and an Irvington, N.J., native. "With paid preparers, you have to pay extra for them to look for extra credits."

For more information, call the center at (858) 577-1040.

Liaisons of ground, air components: MACG-38 units

Story by Cpl. Alexandra M. Vazquez

Marines with reserve and active-duty units who compose Marine Air Control Group 38 came together for a tactical air control class at the Marine Tactical Air Command Squadron 38 building here Jan. 12.

The tactical air control class included a review of MACG-38 units and missions, plus proper air command and control procedures. The class also included a session of practical application using a Marine air support request computer system called Theater Battle Management Core Systems.

MTACS-38 holds the class every few months and tailors each session's information to Marines preparing to deploy or attending a training evolution.

This class teaches scaled-down foundations and basics of air command and control, explained Gunnery Sgt. Robert Sousa, a Tactical Air Command Center operator with MTACS-38, and a New London, Conn., native. If ground units need support from an aviation element, these Marines need to know what kind of support is required and how to request the support. MTACS units are the glue for the ground and air Marines.

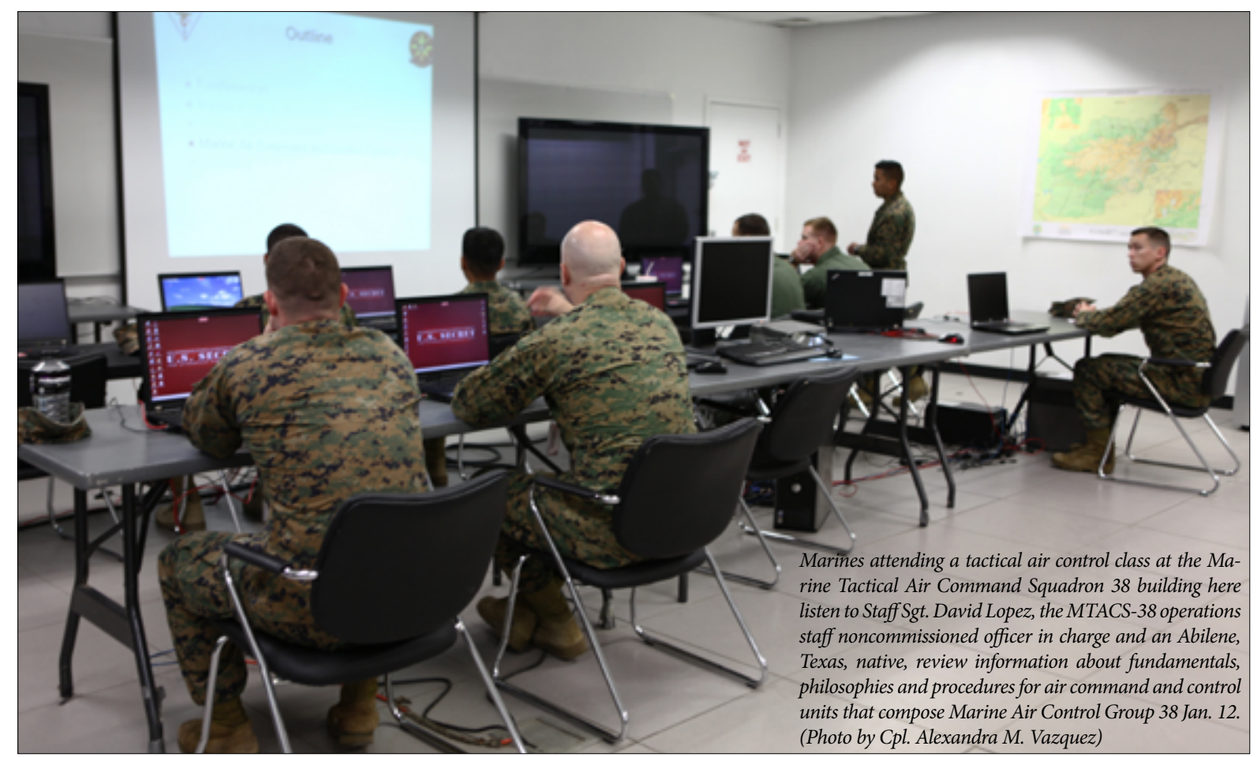
MTACS-38 is an aviation command and control unit that provides 3rd Marine Aircraft Wing with a Tactical Air Command Center, or the operational command post where the 3rd MAW commanding general and his staff plan, supervise, coordinate and execute Marine Air Ground Task Force air operations.

"[In the past], all I focused on was my own job – I didn't see how it affected the guy on the other side of the radio," said Staff Sgt. David Lopez, the MTACS-38 operations staff noncommissioned officer in charge and an Abilene, Texas, native. "The first part of the class helps open up your eyes. Your job is important. By supporting the guy you're talking to on the radio, you're supporting a lot more. Communication [between MACG-38 units] is important for the guys on the ground to get what they need. The class shows you the bigger picture."

During the first part, MTACS-38 instructors reviewed aviation fundamentals and philosophies, joint aviation philosophies, casualty evacuations and medical evacuations procedures, joint tactical aircraft strike requests, request processes and the air-tasking-order cycle. The second and third parts involved the Marines using the management core system to practice using air support request forms.

"We want these Marines to take this knowledge back to their squadrons," said Cpl. Steven Weinberg, a TACC operator with MTACS-38, and a Corona, Calif., native. "We're here to help them improve their skills."

Gunnery Sgt. Robert Sousa, a Tactical Air Command Center operator with Marine Tactical Air Command Squadron 38 and a New London, Conn., native, instructs Marines on the basics of the air support request process during a tactical air control class at the MTACS-38 building here Jan. 12. (Photo by Cpl. Alexandra M. Vazquez)



Marines attending a tactical air control class at the Marine Tactical Air Command Squadron 38 building here listen to Staff Sgt. David Lopez, the MTACS-38 operations staff noncommissioned officer in charge and an Abilene, Texas, native, review information about fundamentals, philosophies and procedures for air command and control units that compose Marine Air Control Group 38 Jan. 12. (Photo by Cpl. Alexandra M. Vazquez)

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ID center simplifies paperwork process

Story by Lance Cpl. Erica DiSalvo

As more people enlist in the Defense Enrollment Eligibility Reporting System, a computerized database of service members and their dependents eligible for military and health benefits, the wait and enlistment process can become a burden to those who do not know the proper steps.

The Marine Corps Air Station Miramar Identification Card Center simplifies the procedure by addressing the issues of appointment scheduling and proper paperwork upon arrival.

"Those who don't have either an appointment or a minimum of two valid forms of [identification] could end up waiting a minimum of two hours," said Jamie M. Botha, the ID Card Center supervisor and a Phoenix native. "Also if the IDs people bring in are expired or are not consistent with primary forms, we may not even be able to help those who have been waiting."

Seven days in advance is the minimum recommended time frame an appointment can be booked by phone or online. All customers with appointments are given priority before walk-in customers.

The ID card center creates military and dependent identification cards for active-duty, reservist and retired service members, Department of Defense workers as well as military dependents.

Military benefits are also removed and granted through the ID Card Center for those who meet DEERS eligibility requirements.

"Any time someone gets married or divorced, they must come through our office to have the benefits doled out or taken away," said Botha.

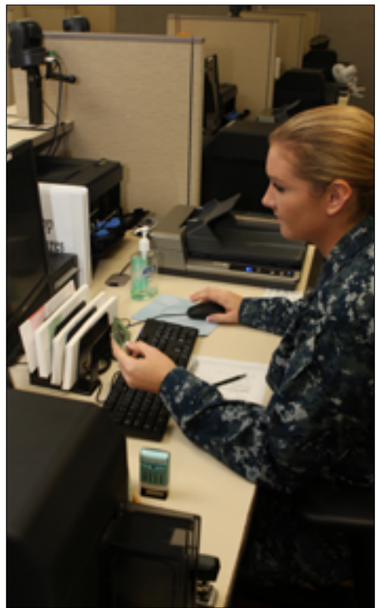
To do this, customers must have two forms of valid identification. ID Card Center policy will not allow any exceptions for those who have left their birth certificates or forms of ID either in their home or home of record explained Botha.

The staff has created a statement of understanding, found online as well as in office, which states what each type of request filed within the ID center requires.

"We really just want to let everyone know what they need to bring or do to be helped successfully when they come in," said Chief Warrant Officer 2 Wojciech Faryniarz, the ID Card Center officer in charge and a Brooklyn, N.Y., native. "I would hate to have someone drive possibly hours to be helped here, only to have to turn right back around and get the proper paperwork."

For more information on appointment scheduling or to view the statement of understanding, which is used for both Marine Corps and Navy identification processing, visit *http://www.marines.mil/unit/mcasmiramar/Pages/jrc/idcards.aspx.*

(Above) Lance Cpl. Leslie E. Martinez, an Identification Card Center verifying official with Headquarters and Headquarters Squadron and a Logan, Utah, native, schedules an appointment by phone here Jan. 18. Customers are encouraged to make an appointment seven days in advance. The wait period for a walk-in customer is a minimum of two hours. (Photo by Lance Cpl. Erica DiSalvo)



(Left) Petty Officer 3rd Class Malaea M. Robidart, an Identification Card Center verifying official with Headquarters and Headquarters Squadron and a St. Simons' Island, Ga., native, updates a service member's record to reflect their new military status here Jan. 18. (Photo by Lance Cpl. Erica DiSalvo)

(Right) Lance Cpl. Luesan S. Lewis, left, an Identification Card Center verifying official with Headquarters and Headquarters Squadron and a Dallas native, gives Petty Officer 2nd Class Regan Wilfred, right, an aviation machinist mate with Marine Aviation Logistics Squadron 11 and a McKinney, Texas, native, a newly created identification card here Jan. 18. (Photo by Lance Cpl. Erica DiSalvo)

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Petty Officer 3rd Class Broderick Sizemore, a plane captain with Marine Fighter Attack Training Squadron 101 and a Laketon, Ind., native, checks the aircraft fuel filters of the F/A-18C here Jan. 17. Plane captains inspect aircraft three times before a flight to ensure the safety of the pilot. (Photo by Lance Cpl. Rebecca Eller)

Plane captains on the line

Story by Lance Cpl. Rebecca Eller

With their hands covered in grease and their uniform reeking of jet fuel, the hard workers on the flight line here spend all day ensuring the FA-18 is ready for flight.

In most jobs in the Marine Corps, the work day does not end until the job is done. For powerline plane captains with Marine Fighter Attack Training Squadron 101, it is no different.

Powerline plane captains typically work 10 to 12 hour shifts, bracing either brisk winds or the sun's heat to inspect the aircraft. Inspections ensure there are no leaks and nothing is loose nor missing from the aircraft and it is ready for flight.

"The pilots are putting their lives in our hands," said Petty Officer 3rd Class Broderick Sizemore, a plane captain with VMFAT-101 and a Laketon, Ind., native. "When we inspect these aircraft, we have to make sure nothing is missing and everything is good to go for these pilots."

In order to ensure this, plane captains constantly conduct inspections. The plane captains inspect before the pilot comes out, while the pilot is sitting in the aircraft and post flight once the aircraft returns.

While each specific maintenance shop masters their own expertise, powerline plane captains are jacks of all trades. Plane captains are responsible for maintaining the entire aircraft and knowing all its components.

With safety as one of the biggest concerns for plane captains, providing clear communication with the pilot is vital, and is accomplished through hand-and-arm signals. Plane captains must memorize more than 100 hand-and-arm signals to communicate with the pilot.

Because powerline plane captains have a thorough job and the lives of the pilots depend on them, becoming a plane captain is a lengthy process. After completing military occupational specialty school, training is continuous.

"We have a month-long MOS school and then come here for on-the-job training," said Lance Cpl. Justin Gardner, a trainee plane captain with VMFAT-101 and a Salem, Utah, native. "No one can teach this entire job without having hands-on experience."

There are several components that go into the functionality of the F/A-18. Plane captains are the last people to look over an aircraft before it departs. At least three plane captains go over the aircraft to guarantee nothing was overlooked.

Powerlines may be a dirty job, but plane captains do not mind the grime if it means a safe flight for the pilots.

Petty Officer 3rd Class Broderick Sizemore, a plane captain with Marine Fighter Attack Training Squadron 101 and a Laketon, Ind., native, signals to the pilot to check the F/A-18C functions here Jan. 17. Plane captains use hand-and-arm signals during their final inspection to communicate with the pilot. (Photo by Lance Cpl. Rebecca Eller)

> "The pilots are putting their lives in our hands. When we inspect these aircraft, we have to make sure nothing is missing and everything is good to go for these pilots."
>
> Petty Officer 3rd Class Broderick Sizemore
> Plane captain with VMFAT-101

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(Left) A chemical, biological, radiological, and nuclear defense specialist demonstrates an exercise to Marines in the confidence chamber here Jan. 12. Marines perform exercises in the gas chamber, so they feel confident the seal of their M-50 field protective mask will not break from movement.

(Right) CS gas powder burns in a Bunsen burner inside the confidence chamber here Jan. 12. CS gas is a riot agent all Marines must face when using the M-50 field protective mask during training. The gas causes severe discomfort, coughing, sneezing, burning of the eyes and skin inflammation.

Training a gas for Miramar Marines

Story and photos by Pfc. Christopher D. Johns

Marines entered a smoky, dimly-lit room where chemical, biological, radiological and nuclear defense specialists commanded them to break the seal of their masks, exposing them to the effects of CS gas.

This event is part of the Marine Corps' annual training requirements and prepares Marines for the possibility of a chemical-warfare situation.

To ensure Marines grasp the basic fundamentals of the gas-chamber exercise, instructors teach nine classes that cover protective equipment and the course of action inside the chamber.

"Marines receive classes on Mission Oriented Protective Posture, how to properly don all the gear, how to treat a casualty and proper decontamination," said Philadelphia native, Cpl. Evan R. Stevenson, a CBRN defense specialist with Marine Aircraft Group 11. "After the classes, they learn to have confidence in their gear inside the gas chamber."

While the CBRNs prepare the gas chamber, Marines wait outside in lines. In the middle of the room, instructors break open capsules of the CS powder into a Bunsen burner, causing a thick grey cloud of smoke to fill the room.

"CS gas is a riot agent," said Lance Cpl. Devin J. Taranto, a CBRN defense specialist with MAG-11 and a North Haledon, N.J., native.

The gas causes symptoms like tearing up, producing snot, burning of the eyes, skin inflammation, coughing, sneezing and extreme discomfort, he explained.

"You are so uncomfortable that you want to get out of the area," said Sgt. Rachel E. Campbell, the noncommissioned officer in charge with the CBRNs of MAG-11 and a Tacoma, Wash., native. "Unless you know how to control you reactions, like we've been trained to do, you're kind of going to freak out."

Once inside the chamber, Marines put one hand on the front of the gas mask and breathe out to clear it of any harmful air that may have entered. After they're confident the mask is clear, they put both hands on the air cartridges and breath in again to make sure the mask is securely sealed to their skin.

"In a contaminated environment, you're not just going to stand as still as possible," said Taranto. "So we do a series of exercises, like bending at the waist, shaking your head vigorously, and side straddles hops – just to show that once the mask is sealed, it's going to stay sealed."

"We count off before you break the seal, you know, 'one, two, three, close your eyes, hold your breath.' Then we tell [the Marines] to loosen the two cheek straps and break the seal by poking the first two fingers of each hand through the seal of the mask and pull it away from their face for about 30 seconds," said Taranto.

All this is done to show that Marines can re-don and clear their masks if something should go wrong, Taranto added.

Once Marines get the all clear, they leave the chamber to strip their MOPP gear off using the buddy system. The buddy system is used to make sure a Marine doesn't contaminate himself.

"There are three ways to do MOPP gear exchange, but the buddy system is the best," said Taranto. "Your buddy is taking [the MOPP gear] off very delicately, while you're making sure he doesn't [accidentally contaminate] you."

No matter how many times a Marine has been through the training, each course is essential to a Marine's success in the battlefield. Even if he never has to use it, the knowledge is still there.

"I've been through [the gas chamber] about 15 times, so I'm not scared," said Gunnery Sgt. Jeremy L. Hammock, a power plant production control chief with Marine Aviation Logistics Squadron 11. "You never know when you're going to need that kind of training."

Although Hammock himself has not seen this training used in actual combat, he said a Marine never knows when he is going to have to teach this training to a younger Marine.

"The information from each class and the confidence in the gear Marines use will be passed from generation to generation, from senior Marine to junior Marine, allowing the Corps to maintain its first-to-fight mentality.

For more photos click HERE

A Marine Corps Air Station Miramar Marine breaks the seal of his M-50 field protective mask inside the confidence chamber here, Jan. 12.

Marines with Marine Aviation Logistics Squadron 11 don and clear their gas masks before entering the gas chamber here Jan. 12. The gas chamber is where Marines learn to have faith in their gear and confidence in the fundamentals they were taught.

Cpl. Evan M. McMullin, a chemical, biological, radiological and nuclear defense specialist with Marine Aircraft Group 11, demonstrates the proper wear of full Mission Oriented Protective Posture gear during classes before the gas chamber exercise here Jan. 12.

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Junior Marine racks up experience on the table

Story by Pfc. Christopher D. Johns

Pfc. Andrew J. Pfenning, an administrative specialist at the Installation Personnel Administrative Center with Headquarters and Headquarters Squadron, lines up his shot at The Great Escape here Jan. 9. Pfenning has been playing pool for almost 14 years and hopes to win the first tournament he takes part in. (Photo by Pfc. Christopher D. Johns)

A focused look dawns on Pfc. Andrew J. Pfenning's face as he aligns his pool stick to the cue ball. He draws his arm back slowly, then fires the stick forward, sending the cue ball crashing into the pyramid, breaking the formation with practiced ease.

Pfenning works at the Installation Personnel Administrative Center from 7:30 a.m. to 4:30 p.m., Monday through Friday. What does he do after work? Simple. He makes a "Great Escape" to play pool.

"I play about every day. [Pool] keeps me out of trouble," he said in a joking manner.

He stalks around the table slowly, taking in all the possibilities he has for a shot. Mechanical in his game, he leans over and sends the seven ball home to a corner pocket.

After 14 years of playing the game, everything looks like it comes naturally to the 18-year-old administrative specialist with Headquarters and Headquarters Squadron.

"My father would go to biker clubs when I was younger," he said. "[Pool] was a pastime for him, and I wanted to give it a shot. I've loved [pool] ever since then."

"[My father] taught me the basics, keeping my eyes on the ball and some of the more basic shots," said Pfenning as he angles the stick behind his back. "Sometimes he wasn't there, and I had to learn certain shots on my own."

The 5-year-old Pfenning, barely tall enough to see over the table and hands almost too small to fit around the pool stick, would play against big burly bikers.

Pfenning explained that playing pool with the bikers was a normal thing. Eventually the boy began to see the bikers as family and would play pool with all of them because the bikers would teach him too.

"My whole family plays pool. My father's father and his father before him. My mother and my brother play, and my sister will start," explained Pfenning. "One day I'll teach my kids how to play pool just like my family did with me."

Pfenning doesn't just play as a pastime anymore. He has his eyes set on one of the many pool tournaments that take place at The Great Escape.

Although he has yet to participate, Pfenning says he wants to win.

Pfenning looks up from his game with a smile as a friend walks by and congratulates him on a shot he just made.

"There are certain people that I like to play [pool] with," he said as he lined up his next shot. "If there isn't anyone to play with, then I'll play by myself and get in some extra practice."

One of those people is Lance Cpl. Anthony J. Golden, who has been playing the game for six years.

"He's got potential," said Golden. "He gets really focused, and he'll wait to take a shot."

> "My whole family plays pool. My father's father and his father before him. My mother and my brother play, and my sister will start. One day I'll teach my kids how to play pool just like my family did with me."
>
> Pfc. Andrew J. Pfenning
>
> Administration apecialist with the Installation Personnel Administrative Center

Pfenning and Golden play pool about once a weekend, said the 20-year-old legal clerk with H&HS.

Pfenning lines up a risky-looking shot and hits the cue ball neatly, banking it off the rail and dropping yet another ball into one of the six pockets, leaving one ball left.

Pfenning stares at the ball as he walks slowly around the table, looking at the shot possibilities he has. The eight ball looks like it's staring back, the white circle like an eye, daring Pfenning to miss the shot and lose the game.

Calmly, Pfenning leans over the rail; lines up his shot then lets fly the cue ball, sending the final ball careening into the corner pocket.

For more photos click HERE

Pfc. Andrew J. Pfenning, an administrative specialist at the Installation Personnel Administrative Center with Headquarters and Headquarters Squadron, takes his aim for a shot at The Great Escape here Jan. 9. Pfenning plays pool at The Great Escape almost every day after work. (Photo by Pfc. Christopher D. Johns)

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The Miramar Minute

Fog of fire: Aircraft Rescue and Firefighting Marines train for life saving situations

Video by Lance Cpl. Max Pennington

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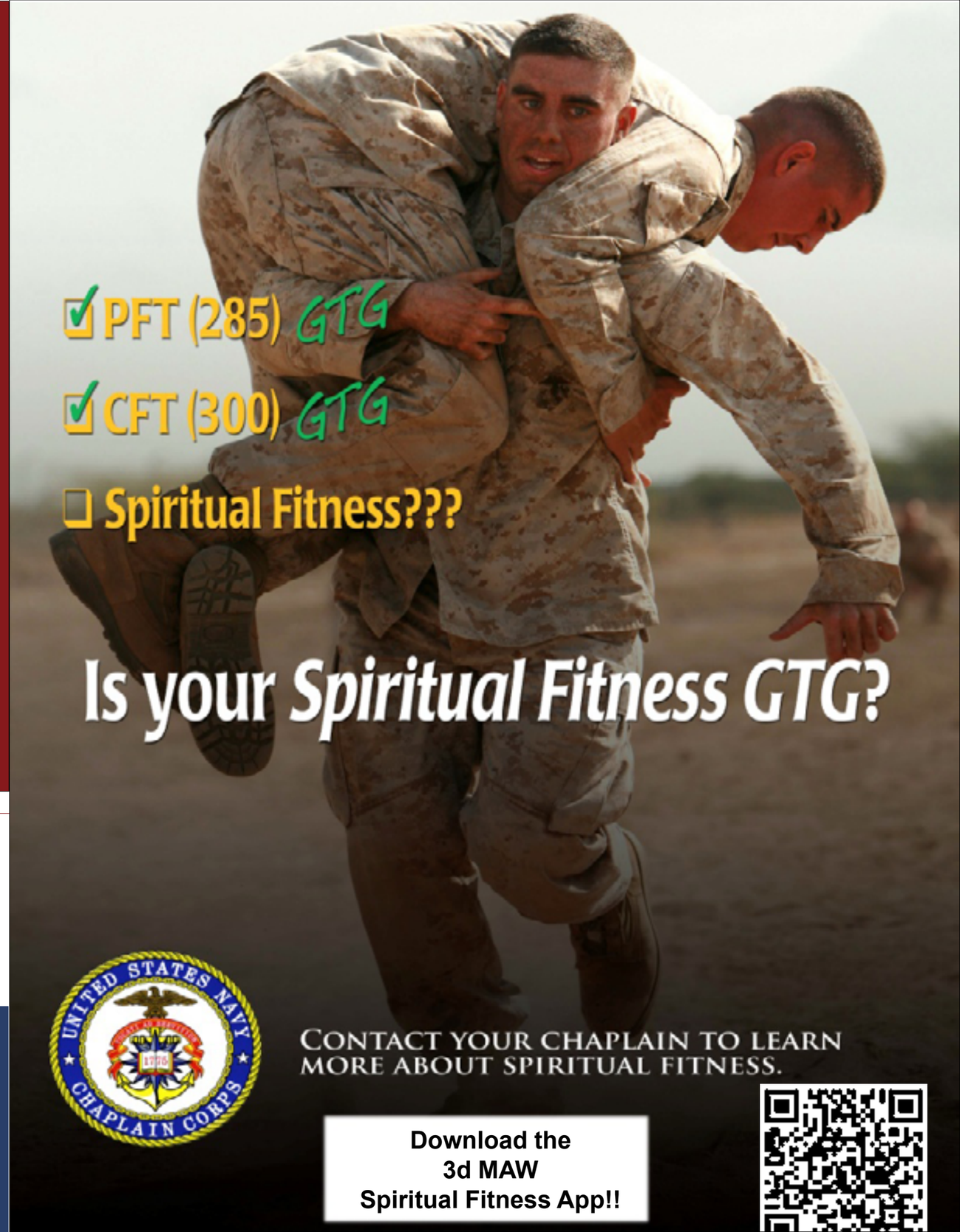
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